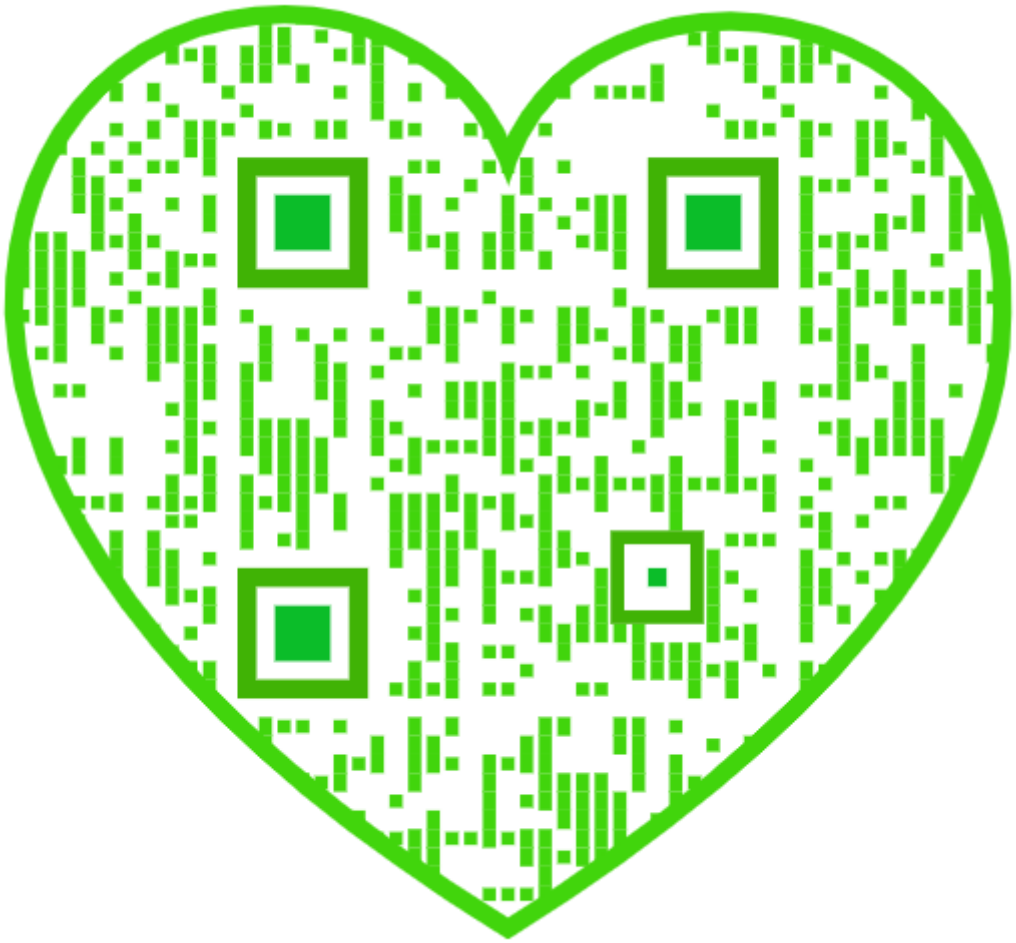

OVER·THE ALPS ·ON·A· BICYCLE

ELIZABETH·ROBINS·PENNELL·

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

A CANTERBURY PILGRIMAGE.
OUR SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY.
TWO PILGRIMS' PROGRESS.

*** These volumes, together with the present, complete a Journey made by Bicycle and Tricycle from London to Rome in the years 1884 to 1897.*

OVER THE ALPS ON A BICYCLE

BY

ELIZABETH ROBINS PENNELL

ILLUSTRATED BY

JOSEPH PENNELL

1757

LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN
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1898.

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TO THE ALPINE CLUB,

TO WHOM I SHOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT

THAT THERE IS ANOTHER

AND MORE DELIGHTFUL METHOD OF CLIMBING.

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OVER THE ALPS ON A BICYCLE

I

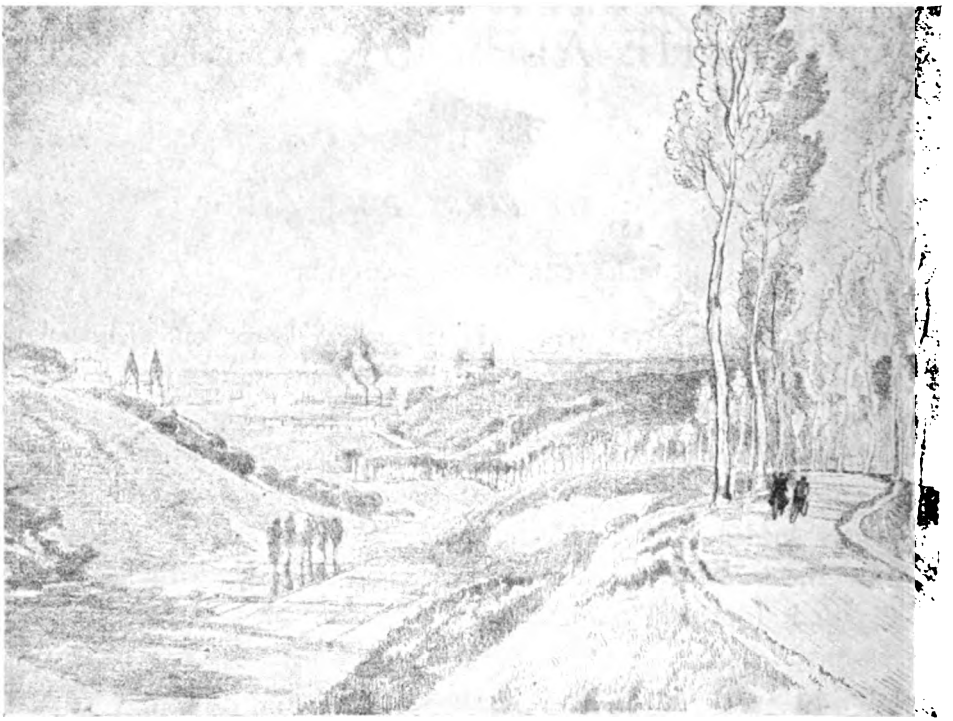
MY FIRST PASS

THE COL DE LA FAUCILLE

I DID not think I was very original, when I set out deliberately to make a record. Other great people have crossed the Alps: Hannibal on elephants, Cæsar in a litter. According to David and the *Century* poster, Napoleon pranced over on a white charger; according to Daudet, Tartarin fell over. Armies have crossed, and diligences loaded with Cook's tourists pass every day, and cyclers too. And if the name of the first man to climb the Alps with his bicycle is disputed, I propose to immortalise the name and adventures of the first woman.

To go over the Alps on a bicycle you must first have your bicycle, and then get it to Switzerland. Like most people, J. and I have our wheels. Unlike most people, when we want to travel we ride. We should have put them in crom-a-boos and sent them by train. But, along good roads, and vile *pavé*, up hill and down, through rain and sunshine, we bumped and we glided from Dieppe to Dijon, with hardly a pause save to eat and to sleep. When we

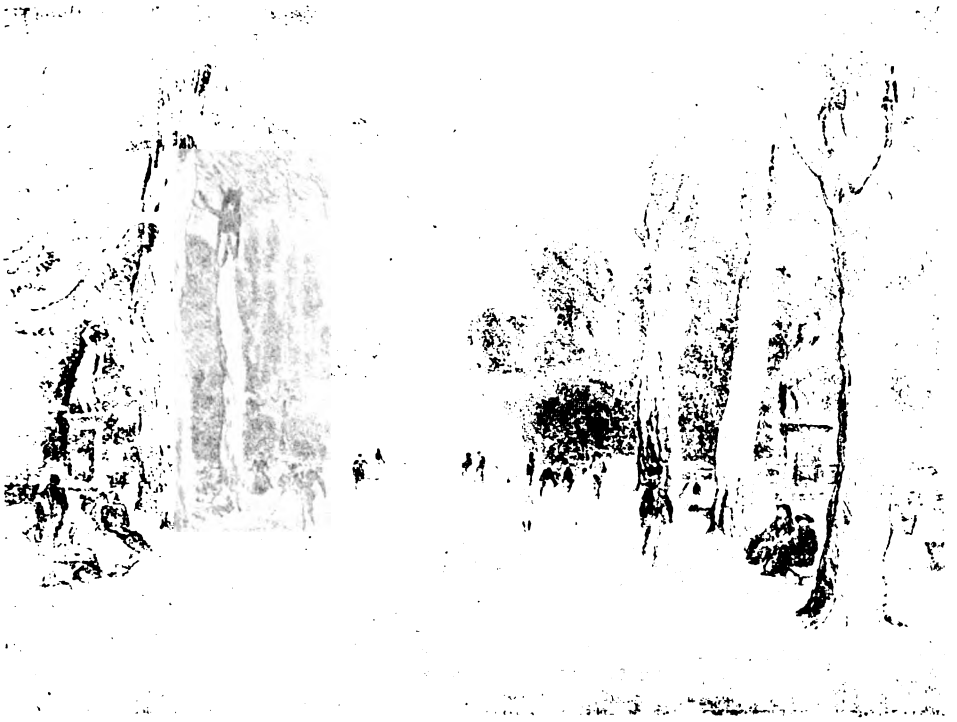
came to the summit of the hill down which you coast eight kilometres into that place, we should have seen the Alps rising on the horizon as they do in theatrical drop curtains and on Turner's canvases. But



DIJON.

factory smoke and mist wiped out the distance. Up and down we rode to Dôle, and, in the footsteps of Ruskin, and Albert Smith, and Elwell's cycle tourists, and our own—for we had been there before—we went to the little Park that was to afford us a panorama of peaks and

precipices. Instead, rain washed out the view. Our landlady consoled us by the assurance that after rain, if you got up early enough, you could see the white range quite clear against the sky. In the morning



THE LITTLE PARK AT DÔLE.

we overslept ourselves; there was blinding yellow light everywhere, but not an Alp.

Up and down for another day we rode, and then we were well in the Jura, on our first pass, the Col de la Faucille. How much I had heard

of that pass! How steep it was to be, and how terrible the three kilometres at the top! To mount them I ate two breakfasts, one after the other. The French custom officers at Les Rousses bade me an excelsior-like *adieu* as they stamped my machine, and, in the wheel tracks of a Swiss from Geneva, the number on his bicycle waving gaily behind him, I began the climb. It was not long, however, before even I caught up to him, and he addressed me with what breath was left him almost in the words of Longfellow: not, "Beware the pine-tree's withered branch; Beware the something avalanche!" but "Look out fur dem last dree kilometre. He shteep." I did not pause at the moment, but I should like to now, to record one philological fact—the Swiss have no language of their own, and are therefore compelled to express themselves with equal clumsiness in three others, as may be discovered in any hotel or cuckoo shop of their country.

This Swiss, by riding very hard, again got ahead of me. I did not hurry much myself, but I hurried him. I rode on, and I rode on, and I rode on, gradually climbing, he puffing all the while like a small steam engine, until suddenly the road became flat and began to go downhill, and with a final grunt of triumph, he tumbled off almost under a motor car, which for some unknown reason was standing by itself at the top, and said, "De Col de la Faushille!" And this was a Swiss pass! Why, I know hundreds of hills that are worse, and yet, when I came to look in my Baedeker, I found I had climbed, without feeling it, 4,356 feet, nearly a thousand feet above the summit of Snowden, almost as high as Ben Nevis.

We were not yet in Switzerland, but the manners of the French in this part of the world were quite Swiss: they had none. As the people of the inn at the top seemed to think it was run for their benefit, and not

for that of their guests, we left. The Swiss cycler called after me, "*Haben Sie ein vary gut brack? For Sie mussent zuruck pedallen and it is besser ein pine-tree après soi de trainer!*" It was a blessing to be rid

COMING DOWN THE COL DE LA FAUCILLE.

of this polyglot. I got on, I pumped up my pneumatic brake, I back-pedalled hard; and then I remembered there was a view. I jumped off and I looked. The road zigzagged down the mountain side, pine forests grew toward heaven, a flat, grey-green streak of country stretched away

below, a whitish line filled the distance, and instead of Ruskin's stargirt, glistening-white, village-crowned, glacier-bound chain of Alps, were vast cloud banks. However, I had come out not to see views that were not to be seen, but to go over the Alps on a bicycle, and so I pumped up the pneumatic again and began my ride down. The road was broad and beautifully engineered, for we were still in France. When I reached the first curve I had a bad time. The road doubled straight back on itself; on one side, the pine forest, on the other a drop of some thousand feet. Every yard or so a stone post, just high enough to hit my pedal, was to save me from grim death. I steered from the precipice and tried to come round with the dignity that befits my twenty years of cycling. But the road was not banked up. I ran into the gutter, and sat down in the bushes. I picked myself up and looked over the side. Half a dozen zigzags below was J. coasting like mad, foreshortened so I could only see the top of his head. He approached a curve. As he turned it he leaned right out over the precipice. He took his hands off. Heavens! was he falling? No, he was lighting his pipe. If he could get down, so could I. It is true I rode for a while in a most lady-like manner, but after half a dozen turns, by keeping my pneumatic on and by back-pedalling for all I was worth, by turning as short as possible at the curves, there was no trouble. I actually caught up to J.; he was sitting on the bank at the time, smoking.

It was a stunning ride. The gradient was not very steep, and it became easier where the road wound back and forth and round and about among the foot-hills. Never once, however, did I let the machine go. We both put our faith in the pneumatic brakes and our feet on the rests, and coasted delightfully. Did we look at the view? As I have

said, there was not much to look at. But if there had been, the machines were about all we could attend to. We did stop every little while, and once we had the pleasure to behold in a cloud of dust, away above us, the polyglot phrase-book Swiss, a pine-tree tagged to his wheel, wobbling down with difficulty. After that, we saw him no more. I had heard of the terrors of this pass for years, and I found a perfect coast. There were only two interruptions : one at Gex for lunch, and a second at Sacconax, that the thrifty Swiss Government might extract from us eighteen francs for the privilege of coming into the country and spending about 1,800. You can cycle freely, without let or hindrance from the authorities, in every part of Europe, except in the two petty divisions known as Belgium and Switzerland. Switzerland would cease to exist to-morrow but for the tourist, and yet, unless he travels in their carriages, employs their guides, and goes to their swell hotels, the Swiss do nothing but bother him from morning till night.

No sooner, after an unnecessary delay of at least half an hour, did we escape from the custom house, than we came to bad roads. The Swiss would never have had anything worth having but for the foreigner, and when they get a decent thing they do not know enough to take care of it. Swiss roads were built mostly by Napoleon, and now that there is no Napoleon, they are going to rack and ruin. Swiss mountains have all been climbed by Englishmen. Swiss hotels are all supported by Americans. And if it had not been for Gessler, a foreigner too, the people might never have had a music-hall hero like William Tell.

We came to Geneva, and wheeled down the long street, at the end of which Mont Blanc, according to all the photograph shops, rears its head so proudly. But Mont Blanc was not there, and a second glance

showed that it would not have been in the photographs either if the photographer had not painted it in. I began to wonder if, like the Swiss waiter, it had gone abroad to make its fortune. To be quite sure,

WHERE MONT BLANC SHOULD BE.

we took the highest room in the swellest hotel looking toward where the mountains should have been; and at dinner we listened to all the languages of the earth between the gobblings and the courses of an eminently respectable and utterly characterless *table d'hôte*.

II

MY SECOND PASS

LA TÊTE NOIRE

As there are no Alps at Geneva, and as Mont Blanc is not visible from that town—I have been there three times, and have never seen it, and therefore my testimony is of value—we left as soon as possible, with the object of crossing the Alps on a bicycle. We wheeled along the road immortalised by Tartarin, we bumped through Bonneville, behind which Turner saw the whole chain glittering, but then we all know that Turner had the independence to see Nature as he wanted to see her, and not as she is ; and Mont Blanc never does, to my knowledge, make a background for Bonneville. And now, as we were getting " upper and upper "—I cannot help quoting " Excelsior," it is so appropriate—the raindrops fell, and, at last, as we ploughed our way between the brakes loaded with tourists that reminded me of nothing so much as a British beanfeast, the clouds emptied themselves in one steady downpour. We pegged on through the rain to Cluses, but our ardour, like ourselves, was dampened. At a tiny wayside inn, where we saw a bicycle, we stopped. Draggled, muddy, sodden, we went inside. I asked a man standing there for a *sirop ;* a woman brought it. " You are English," he said, but in French. My patriotism rose at the aspersion ; I even

forgot the new tariff. "No," said I, "Americans." "Ah!" said he, "you know then, of course, L'Ambassadeur des Etats-Unies, M. Vitlau Ride? Me," smiting his manly breast, "in '89, it was I who was the President of the Paris Municipal Council, and it was I myself who bestowed upon your great country the statue of Liberty Enlightening the World!" I had made a mistake; he was not the keeper of the *café*, but another distinguished storm-stayed traveller. For one hour we talked. When he complained that his tyres would not hold air, and J. proved that it was a good thing, after he had pumped them up, to fasten the valves, I thought he would have embraced us both. But he refrained and only drank a glass of beer at J.'s expense. By the time we had settled the affairs of the Universe, the rain had ceased, and we started on. I know I should have beaten the President of the Paris Municipal Council if he had not, within a hundred yards, fallen flat in the mud. I felt like dismounting and helping him to pick himself up. But he was so fat, and J. was so far ahead, and I was so much afraid that if I did get off I would never get on again, that I slipped and skidded as well as I could into Sallanches. And I saw him no more.

At Sallanches, where we did not mean to stay, the rain came down harder than ever, and we could not get on. Mountains? Why, you could barely see across the street.

And the next morning there were no mountains, there was scarcely any road. There was nothing but mud. We climbed up and up, by the baths of St. Gervais, by La Fayet. Further on, as I came out of a little tunnel, suddenly, as they always do, the Alps exposed themselves. They gave in; I had conquered them. A break in the clouds and Mont Blanc, with all his great white chain, glittered before me. If

ROAD UP FROM ARGENTIÈRE.

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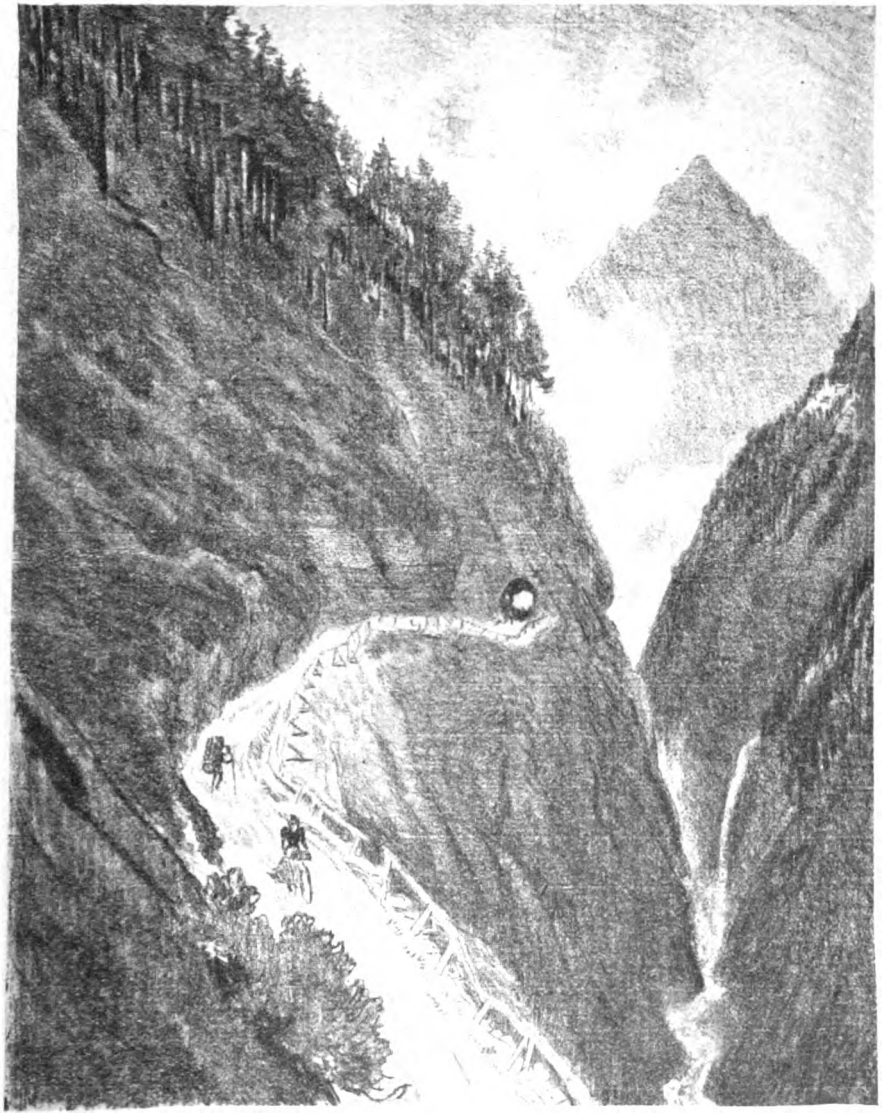
you want to know what that looks like, you must go there yourself, for you can get no idea of that sudden sensational burst of Alpine glory from any written description, from any drawing or painting.

I arrived at Chamounix at noon. My coming made no sensation, and as there are no passes in the town J. and I left after lunch. But not before I had learnt that the most characteristic thing in Chamounix is the statue of De Saussure having the summit of Mont Blanc pointed out to him by Balmat the guide—at least, that is what I believe it represents. Probably this great work of art has been exhibited in the old *Salon*, and, in my capacity of critic of art, I cannot help describing it. The guide has evidently dragged the eminent scientist from the *table d'hôte* dinner of the nearest hotel and, addressing him in his trilingual *patois*, is saying, "But there is a mountain there!" De Saussure replies, "Bless my soul, so there is. I never knew it!" —He was a Swiss.—And the guide says, "We will go up!" and De Saussure says, "Right you are." And the guide says, "Five hundred francs, sir, sheap, very sheap!" And Alpinism is created.

More rain. But unless you are a millionaire or a lover of the German, you cannot stay in Chamounix overnight. I noticed that Mont Blanc discreetly withdrew behind a veil, as if the sights and sounds of tourism were too much for the greatest mountain in Europe. Chamounix being in France, we started off again on good roads for our second pass, the Tête Noire. We rode to Argentière, and then I did not ride any more. I walked, and I shoved, and I pushed through the mud and the mist, till it seemed to me I must have climbed as high as the top of Mont Blanc himself. I left the trees, I came up to the snow, into the region of glaciers and icy precipices, but I never got above the

tourist line. A constant procession was coming over—on horseback, in carriages, on muleback, afoot; among them two Englishwomen who, seeing me, were moved to remark, "*Combien Argentière?*" Not having heard that the place was for sale, I was compelled to reply that I did not know. But if the English will try to speak a language they do not understand, the American always speaks one he does and gets along just as well. I was hardly on my machine again, beginning the coast that followed the climb, when I saw below me a couple of cyclers whom I knew from afar to be fellow-countrymen. I knew it by their hats, by the fact that their coats were off (nobody takes off his coat in cycling but an American), by their braces, and also because they were riding those machines which are always advertised to be the best, though they are not, in the world. But to make assurance doubly sure, no sooner was I within earshot than they called out, "Well, good-day!" If, eventually, the Swiss do not learn the American language, it will not be the fault of the American.

I sailed on down over a splendid road, traversed a deep gorge, and flew across the flimsiest of bridges. At the other end a strange thing happened. The good going ceased, the kilometre stones stopped, a customs officer rushed out. We were in Switzerland again, and at once on bad roads, and hindered and delayed by the petty persecutions of the native, the impetuous beggarly itch to make anything from a penny to a dollar that characterises every Swiss at home or abroad. Though the road to the Swiss frontier is excellent, and though we could perceive no difference in the quality of the rain on the two sides, from the frontier to Martigny, gorgeous and grand in scenery, it is one of the vilest in Europe, outside of Cornwall and Devonshire, and, when we went over it, the muddiest.



THE TÊTE NOIRE ROAD.

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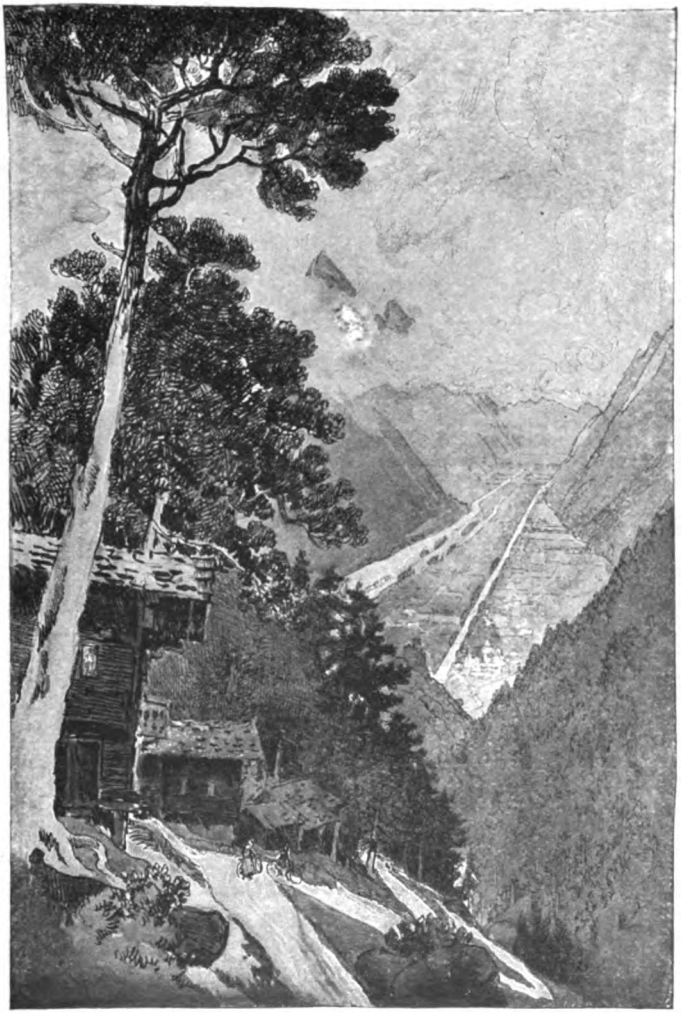
The Swiss do nothing for which there is not a direct return. So long as a road is passable, so long as their horses and mules can drag a gaping crowd of Cook's tourists over it, nobody cares. In fact, it is better that it should be bad, because there is more chance of carriages breaking down, of pedestrians being forced to stop in the hotels that line the way. But what can you expect? Did not Ruskin, years since, prophesy that the tourist would ruin the country and the people, and, if we can believe Byron, already long before Ruskin's day Switzerland was a "curst selfish swinish country of brutes"; if we can believe Shelley, the whole mass of the population already "subsisted on the weakness and credulity of travellers as leeches subsist on the sick." Why, after that, no one can ever again object to my mild and absolutely truthful remarks.

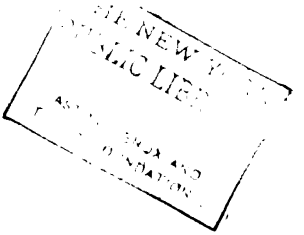
All I shall say about the Tête Noire as a pass is, if you are cycling, avoid it. It is the worst in the Alps, quite unridable as a whole in either direction. When you think you have got to the top beyond Argentière, you only drop down again. Then you climb up through tunnels to the Tête Noire hotel, only to drop down to Trient, and then you have the stiffest climb anywhere in Switzerland. As I pushed and panted through Trient, I heard a woman from over her washtub call out to her neighbour that it must be very painful to travel like that. It was painful. It was beastly. It would have been easier to carry my machine than to push it from Trient to the Col de la Forclaz—an ascent that ought to make me an honorary member of the Alpine Club, though it was J. who did get my wheel up the last zigzags. After this I was more impressed than ever with the wonders of the story of the three gentlemen who carried their machines for hundreds of miles through China. A few yards knocked J. up completely. His language was dreadful, and

so was the road. The descent was worse. The short zigzags were ankle deep in mud, the clouds were as thick as a London fog, and presently they dissolved in torrents of rain. It was just then two or three dreary châlets loomed up through the greyness, and a little girl, with nice manners, a thick plait of hair coiled up at the back of her head, and a basket of fresh eggs and wild raspberries on her arm, asked us and the bicycles into her house. To pass the time, we ate her eggs. She cooked them, laid the cloth, and waited on us with a demure housewifely air that was really very pretty. Then she got out her knitting. There was another little girl in the room and a smaller boy, and a couple of bigger children loomed vaguely in the doorway. The mother came and sat down to put a patch in her husband's trousers, and the small boy cuddled up close to her. It was all as simple and sweet as could be. The rain pelted against the tiny window, and the mother told us of the cold winter when they moved to the valley below, of the death of the old grandfather, of the wanderings of their one cow. The result was, we gave the little girl, who kept the accounts—it was her way of helping, she said—a great deal more than we would have paid for a breakfast at the hotel above. But, after the rain had stopped and the clouds lifted, and the Rhone Valley unrolled itself like a map below, and we were wading once more through the mud, we met a series of the same little girl with nice manners, one pigtail, and wild raspberries, all the way down the zigzags. She was just a part of the Swiss stock-in-trade—like Tartarin's old soldier—to touch the hearts and empty the pockets of the tourist.

The road, after it had finished zigzagging and joined the highway to the St. Bernard, was a trifle better and still down hill to Martigny. I coasted from here, and presently, below, I saw toiling up on his bicycle—



LOOKING UP THE RHONE VALLEY FROM THE COL DE LA FORCLAZ.



and he had not yet got on to the pass, poor man—a lone black figure, his hat in his hand. As he came near, he raised his head, and in well-known accents I heard, "Say, how's the road fur Shamminy?" "You'll see," said J. So long as we have the great American language, where is the need of Volapuk?

Naturally, it cleared before we reached Martigny. We went to the French Touring Club hotel, and the rain coming down again after lunch, we had the pleasure of passing the afternoon in company with a family from Chicago, who divided the time between drinking champagne and listening to a musical box on which mechanical dolls danced for their delight.

The English cycler does a good deal of boasting about his prowess and his rides and his times. But though we were five weeks riding over the Alps, we did not meet a single Englishman on a bicycle. And yet, that night at Martigny, no less than nine Americans turned up, all awheel. Save for one party of three and ourselves, the rest rode alone and were unknown to each other, and were all going in different directions.

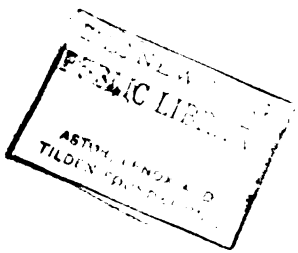
III

J'S PASS

THE ST. BERNARD

WELL, we would not go over the St. Bernard again. It is the easiest and the hardest of all the passes. Rather, we did not go over it. I was so knocked up by the Tête Noire that I took a day off at Martigny, and thereby lost a bit of a record, for the monks at the top told J. that no woman had ever cycled there; while J. did not go down the other side. He says that the ascent to the foot of the actual pass is so easy and gradual that you can ride all the way to the last Refuge, and the road is excellent. But in doing so, you play yourself out before you get no the pass, which is of great steepness, and mounts by very short zigzags among the snow. It took him seven hours from Martigny to the top, and he admits that he had had enough when he got to the Hospice. It was bitterly cold, though extremely picturesque. The pass was enveloped in clouds, snow was falling, the cold was intense, the monks were most hospitable, and the place swarmed with tourists. He walked by the little lakes to the Italian side, and looked down the steep track which disappeared in the thick mists boiling up. There was a veritable *tourbillon* of storm. He went to bed in his little double-windowed cell as soon as it was dark. In the morning, he coasted back again to

THE ROAD TO THE HOSPICE, GREAT ST. BERNARD.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Martigny in about an hour and a half, and met me at breakfast. The coast, he reported, was splendid, but the scenery not very fine until near the top, and there is, according to the guide book, but a mule track down the Italian side for some miles. Save for Napoleonic sentimentalists and lovers of dogs—which he did not see, though he heard them—the pass is hardly worth doing on a cycle, and the convent is a resort of the most noisy and alpenstocked of tourists.

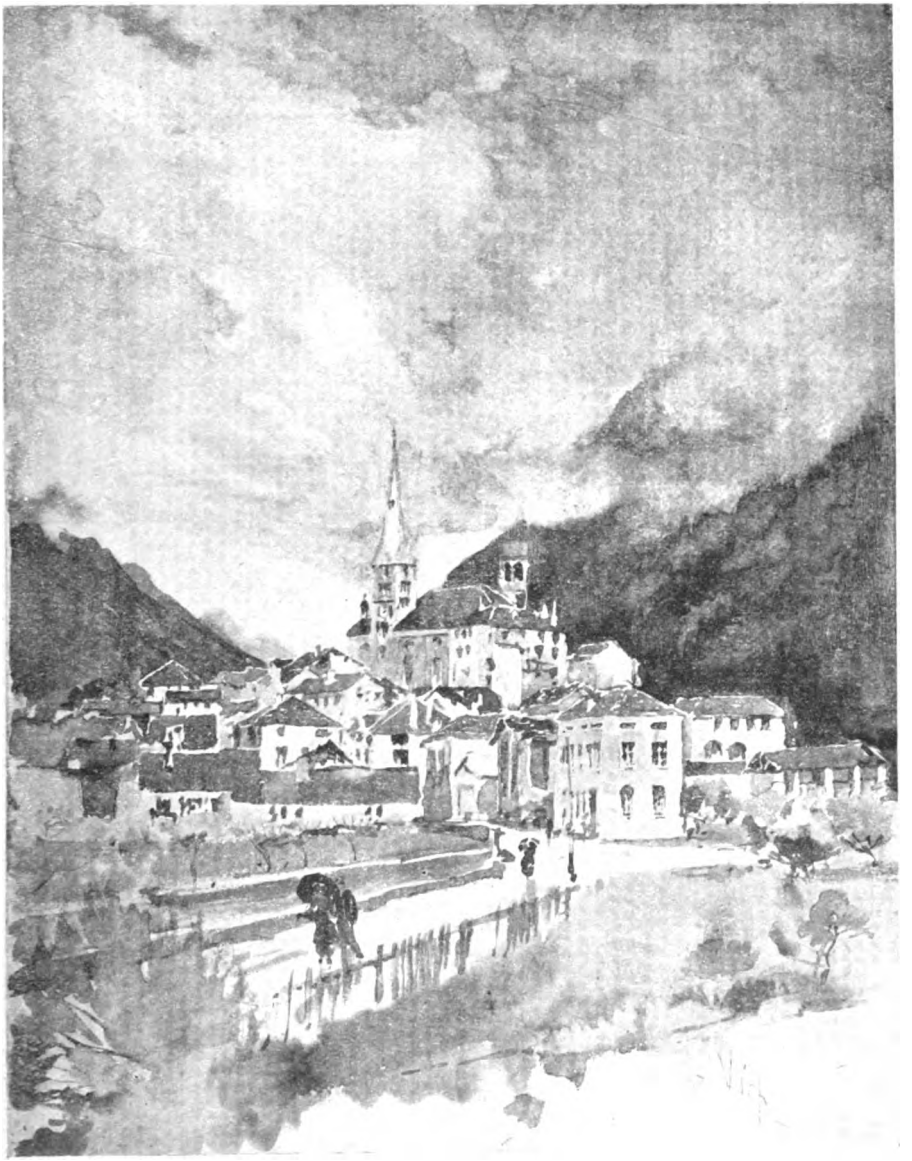
IV

MY FOURTH PASS

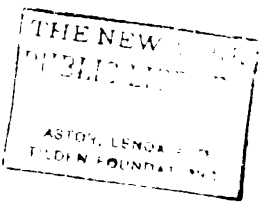
THE SIMPLON

THE same afternoon we started for the Simplon. We followed the straight-ruled line, the road we had seen from the Col de la Forclaz. But everybody goes up the Rhone Valley in the train, a few go on bicycles. As is the way with Alpine valleys, it is shut in by high mountains which shut out the view, and it is infested by tourists, and is fearfully hot. The road is bumpy, there is a gradual rise, but only at the upper end are there any hills worth speaking of. We got to Sion, to Visp, to Brieg, and the next morning were ready to start upon our first great pass by eleven, when, for our comfort, we ought to have been at the top.

A blazing, blinding hot sun was shining, and the road beyond Brieg was shadeless and deep in dust. It set out in a business-like way from the very middle of the town to scale the lower green slopes. The heat was so fierce that the perspiration rolled in great drops from my face and the machine was like fire to my touch. I had to stop every few minutes to cool off, and once we both clambered over a fence and lay full length under a tree, watching the diligence come down in a whirlwind of dust and a cycler following at a speed that



VISP.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would have whirled him into eternity, but for the special providence that watches over the foolhardy wheelman as well as the drunkard. If it was odious to push up under the scorching sun, it was still more

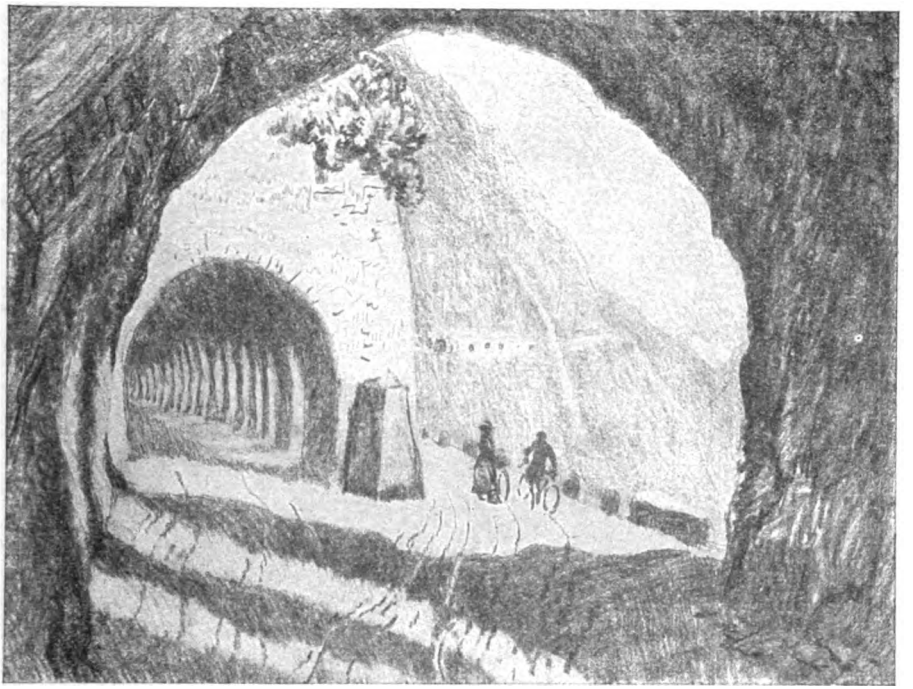
IN THE RHONE VALLEY.

insufferable to sit there getting no further on our journey. I wish I could reconstruct my psychological emotions under these circumstances. When I grumble, people think it is because I am not enjoying myself. But they do not understand. If a coach and six

had been placed at my disposal that afternoon, I would not have taken it, though J. alone knows how ill-tempered I was. I had the grace to be ashamed, and I tried to explain my attitude to him. I hated what I was doing. I hated to walk, to push the machine, to be sweltering in July sunshine, and smothered in dust. But after it was over I knew I should be immensely proud of my achievement, and I was "game" to the end. He said that was the way you felt when you were climbing the high peaks—it was the true sporting spirit—and so we did what we could to make the best of my temper.

The road left the slope to zigzag through woods that were no protection against the sun. Then it skirted the bare mountain side, and I pushed and I plodded, higher and higher, until I stopped in sheer exhaustion at a solitary house—the Second Refuge provided by Napoleon—and we ate our third substantial meal that day. It is amazing how much you can eat when you are crossing a pass. And then the road kept on winding along the brink of the precipice, with such a gradual ascent that for a while I rode, and could have ridden further, so well did the French engineers do their work, it the Swiss knew how to do theirs and could keep it in order. Then it crossed a bridge and went climbing up more steeply to Berisal, and more steeply still, and interminably beyond. The diligence overtook me, and so did a perambulator with a baby in it, and a French nurse from Berisal. I was furious. I watched the diligence crawling along, disappearing round a turn and reappearing further up, still crawling, but now like a big fly in a crack on the slopes. And I pushed and I plodded, past the Fourth and Fifth Refuges, while away below and behind, Brieg kept falling lower and lower and growing tinier and tinier. And

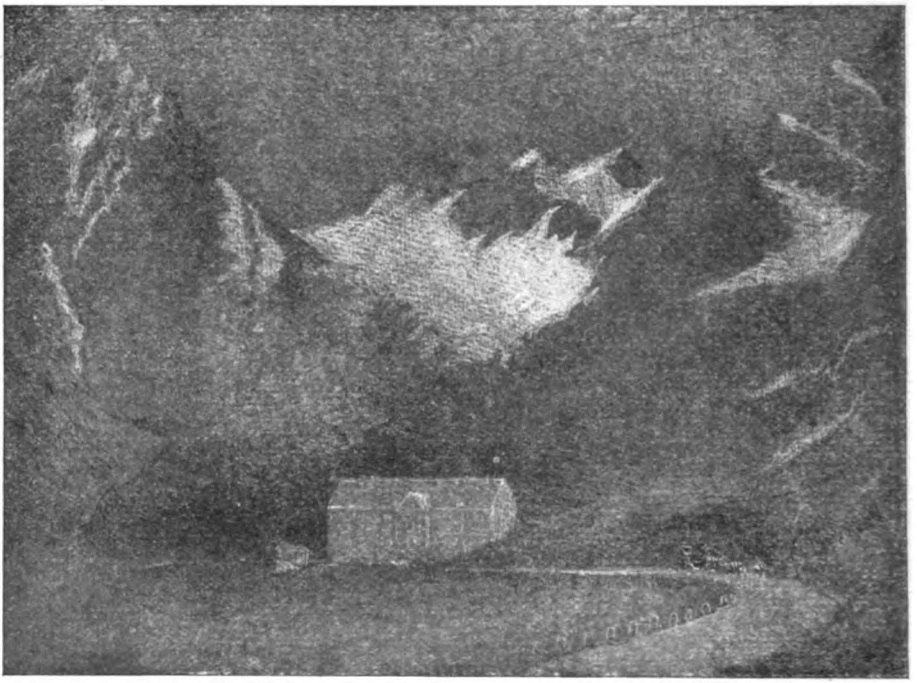
I pushed and I plodded, until my shoulder ached with the perpetual pushing and my feet were like lead, to where a great glacier came flowing over the mountains, and patches of snow whitened the rocks to the right, and the road escaped into covered galleries from the water-



TUNNELS AND GALLERIES OF THE SIMPLON.

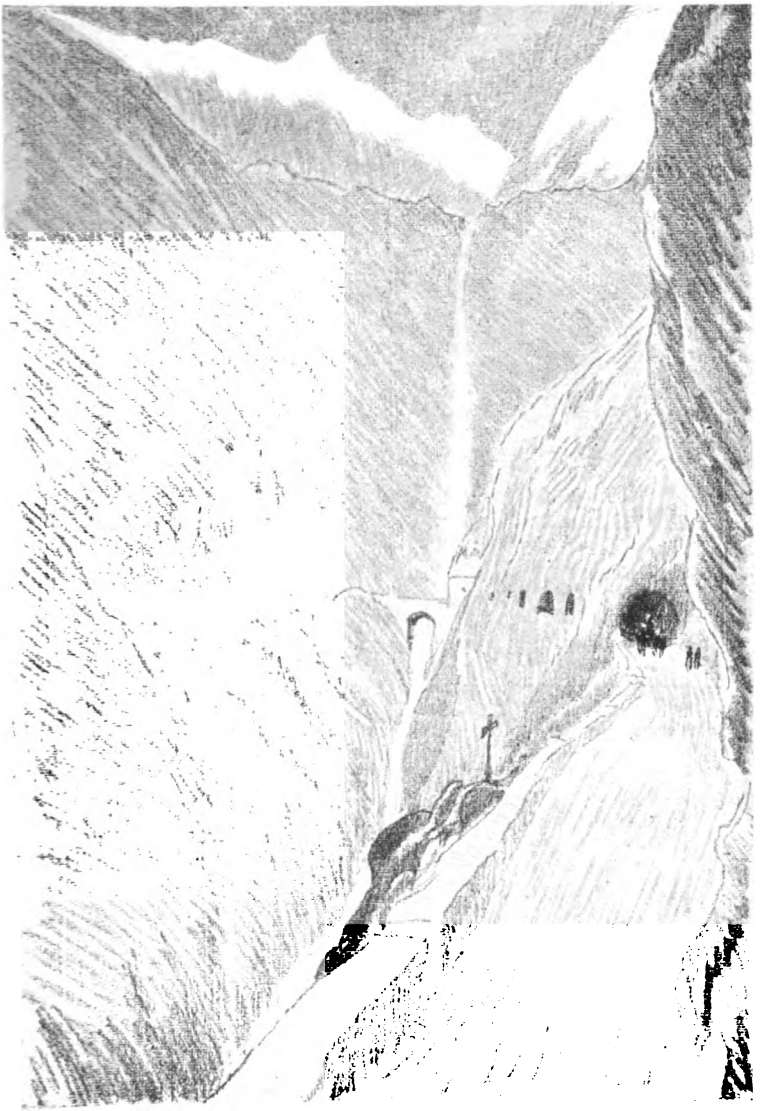
falls that dashed and roared down all around it, and now and then broke even into the tunnels, giving me a good shower bath as I passed ; and on to the Sixth Refuge, and out upon a sort of open moorland. We were at the highest point of the pass, 6,595 feet above the sea.

I had climbed, with my own legs, fifteen and a quarter miles from Brieg, and steadily for seven and a half hours to get there, and now I was there I did not care in the least about anything but the Hospice,



THE SIMPLON HOSPICE.

where we hoped to spend the night, and the Hospice did not as much as show itself until we were almost at the door of the big building that stands back in its semicircle of peaks directly beneath a glacier. If Napoleon put it there to shelter the weary traveller no one had a



MEMORIAL CROSS ON THE SIMPLON.

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ASTOR LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

better right than I to beg a night's lodging. I was never so dead tired in my life.

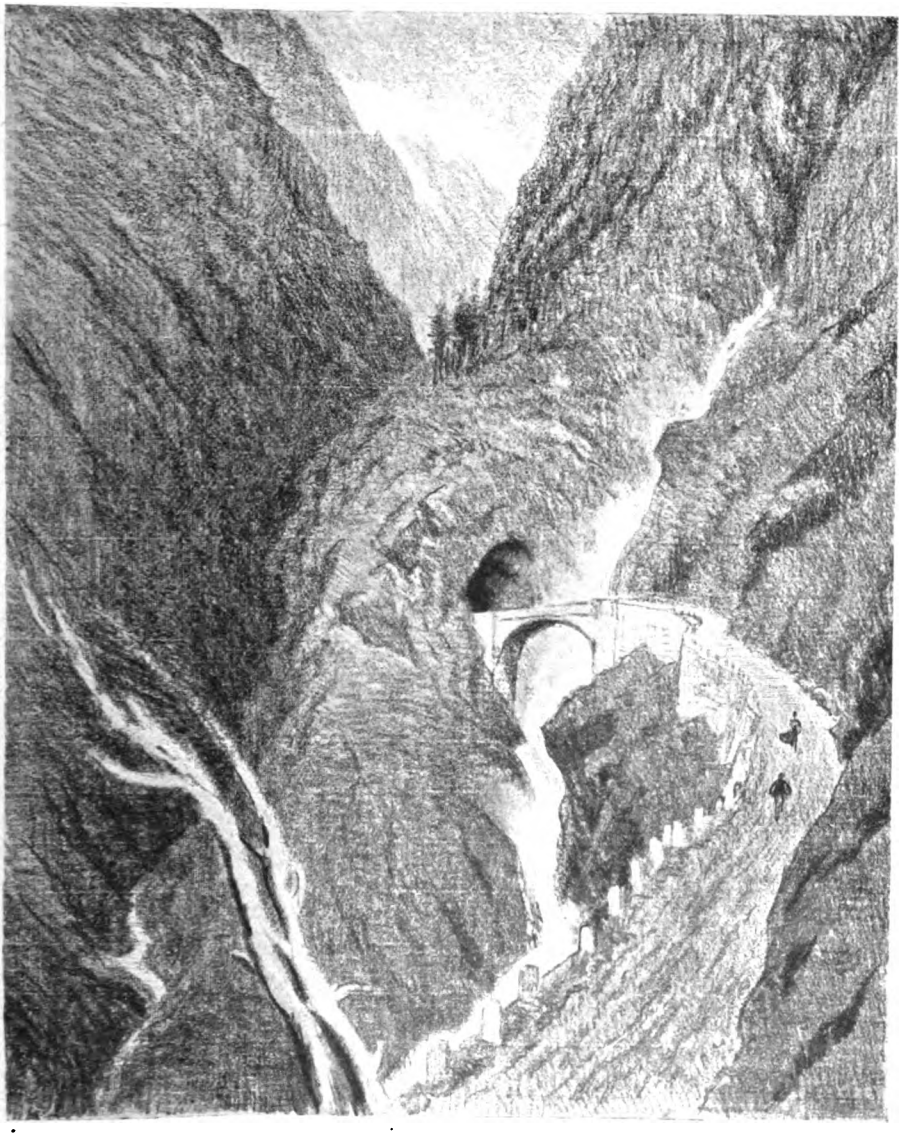
We rang the bell. A nice old monk came to the door, hurried us in, gave us time only to carry the bicycles up the steep flight of steps into the hall, and led us straight, hot and dirty as we were—he would hear of no washing—into a big dining-room, where he and three other monks had just begun their supper. Down we sat with them. It was an excellent meal ; I have seldom tasted better ordinary wine. But the monks were abstemious—one touched nothing, devouring a newspaper instead—and we had not the courage of our appetites. I would rather, however, share a light meal with the monks of the Simplon than dine with the fifty or sixty tourists you find any summer evening at the St. Bernard, all eating and drinking like pigs, though probably in the morning they forget the collection box—their only bill—in the Chapel. But then the St. Bernard is no better nowadays than a pension ; the Simplon is still a genuine Hospice where you are not merely given food and drink and a bed, but are entertained by the monks, as if it were their pleasure, not their duty. It made me think of the wonderful days spent long ago with the Padre Abate at Monte Oliveto, as we sat in the golden evening light, alone with the monks, they telling us of the long winter when only the diligence passes, of the busy summer when the poor labourer and the footsore tramp come in crowds. The tourist, as a rule, sleeps in Berisal or the village of Simplon. But with the first breath of spring the migration of Italian workmen begins—*les hirondelles d'Italie* the monks called them.

A flock of these swallows was perched on the low stone wall opposite the Hospice when we came downstairs after supper. And before we

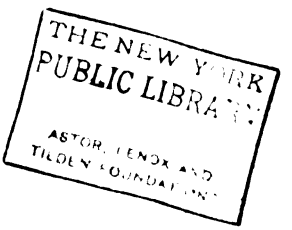
went to bed a cart load of peasant women and a couple of nuns had been deposited at the door, a jaded dusty man on foot, with a great pack on his back, had dragged himself up the steps, and the diligence from Domo D'Ossola had dropped a man with a boy and a youth with a bicycle—that's the proper way to cycle up a pass ; you can even hire a carriage to carry your machine, if you want. The monks received everybody without a word, without a question. And what I liked most was that it was all done simply and quietly—so you could fancy the old monks, in days when they were almost the only innkeepers, welcomed the wanderer. But there is to be a railroad under the Simplon, and the Swiss will rejoice, no doubt, when they have lost one of the few genuine things left to them.

We slept in a large airy bedroom where the furniture, like the building, dated back to the First Empire. Outside the double window was a desolation such as the Prophet never dreamed of ; inside were beds and tables and chairs that a collector might carry away in triumph.

It was bitter cold in the morning, an icy wind blowing over the glacier, snow all around us. We passed the old Hospice, a grim, weather-beaten stone house with a tower, in a much more exposed position, a little further on, showing Napoleon's good sense in choosing the present site. You do not know what a great man he was, even if you have read Professor Sloane, until you have gone over the Alps on a bicycle. Napoleon's cleverness seemed nothing to mine when I put my feet on the rests and coasted down the road he had hung in mid-air. And there was no question of my courage. The occasional memorial cross on the Simplon, put up to mark the spot, perhaps, where the traveller had been lost in the snow or pitched over the precipice,



RAVINE OF GONDO.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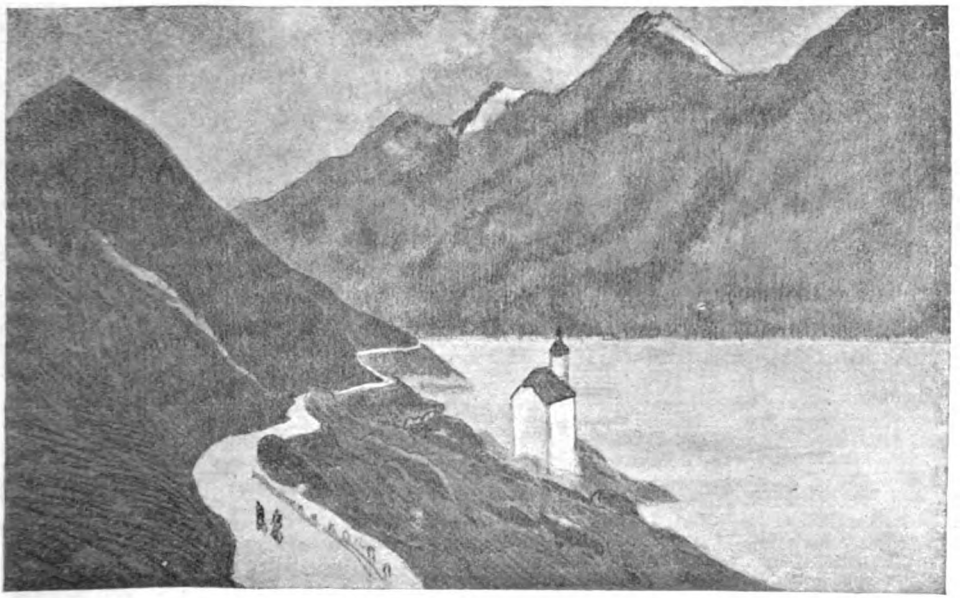
was an eloquent reminder that the danger was not all imaginary. But the pneumatic was pumped up tight, and I held the front brake by means of an ingenious and simple device with a leather strap, that left some power and feeling in my right hand and arm. For kilometres, with only occasional intervals of back-pedalling, I coasted after J.—too



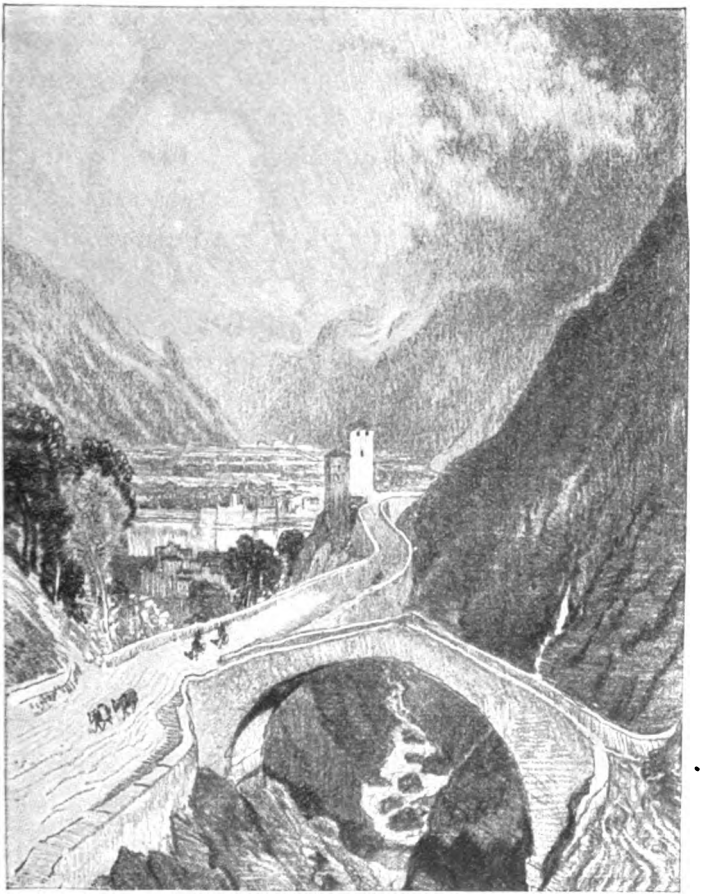
OLD HOSPICE.

far after he said—down the side of the mountain ; down the long zig-zags, where the driver of the diligence, with unexpected courtesy, gave me the inner, which was the wrong side of the road, but then he was an Italian ; through the Ravine of Gondo, with waterfalls booming above and the stream thundering below, and the road crossing and crossing

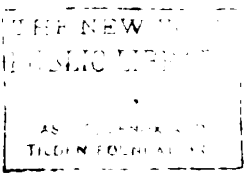
again over airy bridges, and clinging to the side of the precipice, and diving into dark tunnels, and taking sharp turns round the walls of rocks, just where carriages were creeping up; to the Swiss frontier, where the custom officer forced back our money upon us. We wanted to wait until we left Switzerland for good and for all. But he said, and as a Swiss he must have known, we had better take it when we could get it. And I coasted down through the pines, down through the chestnuts, into a land of vineyards and tropical heat, when little more than an hour before I had been shivering.

At Isella was the Italian custom house, where the officer did not browbeat us, but understood at once that the Signore and Signora were travellers, and for a lira and a half presented us with a document big and ponderous enough to have seen a whole army through the country.

Like Heine's Philistine, I began to sing my little Ti-ri-li of exultation to find myself in Italy again. It seemed to me the sky was more tender, the landscape more luxuriant, the people more graceful. I was thinking out an elegant phrase for my note book, and attempting to pass a cart, when, the first thing I knew, the bicycle had caught in deep sand at the side of the road, and I was over in front and the back wheel of the bicycle was under the cart, and there I was, miles and miles from a repair shop, with the rim bent out of shape, the wheel buckled and the frame twisted. In fact, the machine looked more like the folding bicycle of the French army than the Rover I had been riding a second before, and I thought I should have to carry it to the nearest railway station, which was I did not know how far away. But J. took hold of it, shook it viciously, kicked it, pulled it about, and it recovered itself almost miraculously—all but the rim. It was ridable, but I went with a



THE ENTRANCE INTO ITALY.



limping, dot-carry-one action which was as quaint as unusual. The next party of Americans we met shoving up thought it was some strange foreign invention, and said so in our great universal language. However, I managed to ride to the wonderful curve in the road that gives that first perfect view of the Val D'Ossola; on to Domo D'Ossola for lunch; on across the valley fighting a mad wind; on round the shores of Lago Maggiore; on to Baveno. Across the Lake at Intra was a factory, and a mechanic clever enough to put a new rim on an old wheel. This, for the sake of sensation I regret to say, was the one big smash of the ride, and it happened, not on a Pass, but on a nearly level stretch of road.

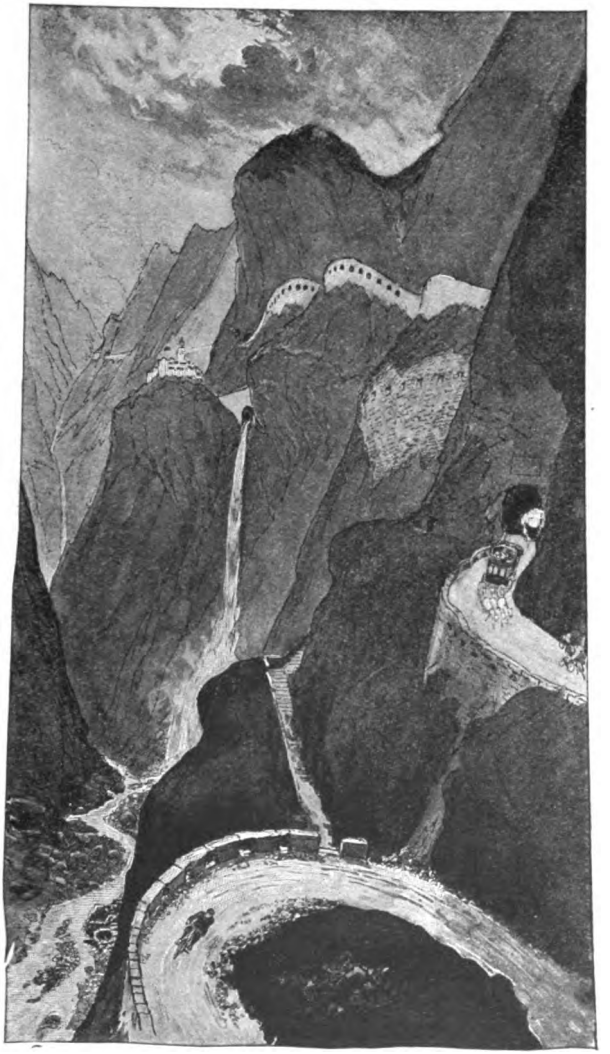
V

MY FIFTH PASS

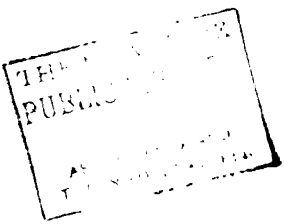
THE SPLÜGEN

As I had journeyed half across Europe not to go round lakes but to ride over the Alps on a bicycle, and as Italy was hot as a furnace, we took a boat to Laveno, rode the short distance to Varese and Como—the population in the little villages mobbing us just as in the old days when we wheeled our tandem through Tuscany, a primeval episode which, though we told the story almost a generation ago, is practically unknown, like all great adventures—and at Como, after lunching on *risotto*, we took another boat up the lake.

We chose this route to the Splügen to see if Como is really as romantic as our sentimental grandfathers have told us. But when the boat started, what I saw was J. in his shirt sleeves, rivers of perspiration streaming from his face, up to his elbows in a bucket of water, hunting for a puncture in his tyre, which had collapsed the minute we had come on board. But to judge by the passengers, the puncture was much more entertaining than the lake. The tourists of all countries crowded around him, and they wanted to know all about it, and what he did with the pneumatic brake, and why he had a gear-case, and various other intricate things, just when the bicycle was



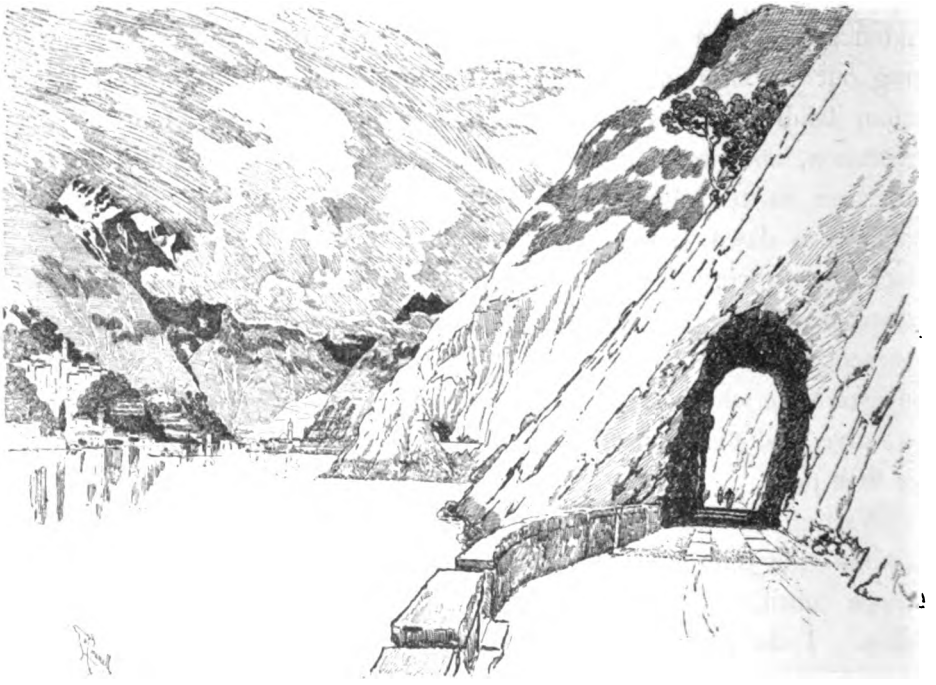
ZIGZAGS, STAIRWAYS, AND TUNNELS OF THE SPLÜGEN.



standing upside down, and he had both hands and the tyre plunged in the water. I do not know what might have happened, if with a lurch of the boat, the bucket had not turned over right on the top of them. And there was not a puncture to be found, and no sooner was the tyre pumped up again than it collapsed again. It was maddening. We landed at Varenna and took the bicycle to the local blacksmith, who hung out the sign of the Italian Touring Club. But, apparently, the Italian Club gives its sign to any one who happens to fancy it as a decoration, and we might as well have asked the blacksmith to talk American as to mend a broken tyre. The result was that in the morning at dawn J. was on his way by boat to Como and a repair shop, where there was somebody who knew something, and we both saw a good deal more of the same part of the lake than we then wanted to, even if it did come up to its romantic reputation. It was three in the afternoon when he got back to Varenna with a new valve, for it was the valve, and not the tyre that had gone wrong, and we could start for our fifth pass.

Waiting on the wharf when he landed were two women with bicycles—the only two we met touring from the moment we left Dieppe until, five weeks later, we bought our tickets home at Calais. I do not count a big German Frau in knickerbockers and many bangles, and what the English call a "fringe net" over her elaborately curled front hair, a pistol and a sketch-book at her waist, who, with her hands in her pockets, swaggered about the boat going up Lake Como. I should have had to see her on a machine to believe in her. The other two were Americans, though one was disguised in the green Austrian mountain dress, and a green felt hat to match, with

a cock's feather stuck in the back. They also were doing the passes, they said ; they had already carried their bicycles through the Tyrol in the train, and had walked up and down the Maloja Pass. We did not have to tell them what we had done—they knew. They had read



THE ROAD ROUND COMO.

our old story, and remembered it. The one in green came running back to tell us so. It may have been foolish, but we liked her for it.

From Varenna to Colico we were on the road an Italian cycler had described as *splenaida ! splendissima !* And splendid it was—eighteen

WINDINGS OF THE SPLÜGEN.

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kilometres of perfect road, perfectly engineered, in perfect condition, keeping close to the lake, tunnelling its way through the rocks where the less skilful engineer would have sent it winding over the mountains.

It was much less easy going from Colico to Chiavienna, where the long climb up the Splügen begins. We were called at five the next day, and were off by six, to get to the top in the cool of the morning. There was no sun, and the valley was already hot and close with the muggy closeness of a coming storm. I walked almost at once. I suppose that, without luggage, and if I had taken my time to it, I could have ridden up this, or any one of the great passes. But I carried luggage, and plenty of it. Besides, on the Splügen, I could always see the stiffer climb that was ahead of me. It was positively cruel the way the road seemed to brag of its steepness. I could watch its course for kilometres up the valley, as it mounted and mounted in tier above tier, through gallery above gallery, in places like a series of terraces cut in the rocky steeps, with no trace of the windings that connected them, so that to me below the mystery was ever how we were to ascend with our bicycles from one to the other. Little footpaths ran straight up the mountain, sometimes in a precipitate flight of stairs, waterfalls crashed and tumbled in endless white lines down the rocks, campanile-crowned villages perched on dizzy heights. The engineers of the Emperor Francis may have been no better than those of Napoleon, but they were more sensational. Their pass was actually not so hard to push up as the Simplon, but it looked harder with its endless stone parapet in long lines and zigzags and curves, mounting and mounting. The Emperor himself seems to have been impressed, for he set a big slab in the rocks near one of the galleries to let you know that he built it.

We ate a second breakfast at Campodolcino, and I doggedly trudged on, now through a thick, cold, wet mist. Clouds blotted out the valley, the opposite mountains, everything but the nearest windings and zigzags of that terrible stone parapet. And, to make matters worse, the wet and the steady up-grade between them brought on a cramp in my leg, and every time I put my foot to the ground the pain cut like a knife. There was a little French soldier who told me once that for men to march with knapsacks on their backs, *tiens!* it was to march like the beasts. The phrase came back to me. To walk up an Alpine pass, through the rain, in a mackintosh, pushing a bicycle, was to walk like the beasts. The kilometre stones showed me how slow the pace was, tall poles I did not understand pointed out unknown dangers, and from the forlorn châlets half-savage children ran out, and fell in behind me chanting in an undertone what sounded like a dirge, but probably was a demand for *centessimi*. I doubt if I realised the misery of that tramp, until a bit of fairly level road gave me a chance to ride, when the riding along a slippery track, with my mackintosh flapping about me, and water dripping from my hat into my eyes, seemed heaven by contrast. I managed to keep on my machine as far as the Italian custom house, where we delivered over our papers and ate our lunch in a little close, dark *café*, with a wonderful collection of old hats and men under them.

After that, there were three more kilometres of zigzags, and clouds, and mud, and soppy green slopes, and it was about as gloomy and nasty as it could be. I passed a wretched stone hut, used as a shelter for shepherds, and the Hospice, which was tight shut, and finally two poles marking the frontier, at a height of 6,946 feet.

WATERFALLS ON SPLÜGEN.

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Immediately and abruptly the descent began, and I was on a bumpy, rutty road, with no kilometre stones, no poles, no parapet. The zigzags were the steepest and the curves the sharpest I had come to yet, and for me there was very little coasting down the Splügen. I cannot say which was the more alarming, to be riding on the zigzags or to be looking down upon them as they lay there, shamelessly exposed, and with J. always ahead, leaning out over the edge at a blood-curdling angle. Below, where the windings lengthened, I could not coast with much comfort, for the road was muddier and ruttier than ever, and covered with stones, and lower still, full of dreary and disconsolate tourists.

At Splügen we were driven into the Swiss custom house and kept there kicking our heels for an hour and a half, for no apparent reason except to make us feel at home in Switzerland again. We had found out that the one thing the Swiss custom officer wanted was a number on each machine, and as nothing else would satisfy him J. made a note of one on his gear case and another on my saddle. He was really too conscientious, for the officer entered them solemnly in the paper he handed to us, without looking at the machines, and I might as well say now that when eventually we left the country at Bâle, no one there made the least effort to verify the numbers. The whole thing was a farce, and the most absurd part of it was that at all the frontier stations the officers were so taken up with these empty formalities it never occurred to them that we carried luggage on our bicycles. Our bags were never opened. We might have smuggled in all the brandy and cigars and matches and watches we wanted, and no one would have been the wiser. But was it not another absurdity that, though J. wore a watch worth far

more than the bicycle, and much easier to sell, and though watch-making is the great native industry calling for protection if anything does, no one ever bothered about it? Truly the custom house, especially the Swiss custom house, is hard to understand.

VI

MY SIXTH PASS

THE SAN BERNARDINO

In the morning, long before the sun was above the mountains, we were on the San Bernardino. A pass a day was now to be our average, an average that Hannibal or Napoleon or Tartarin might have been proud of. As at Hinter Rhein we had already reached a height of 5,302 feet, according to Baedeker, there were but 1,466 feet more to the top of the pass. But if it sounded a mere trifle after the tramp of the day before, it meant after all ten kilometres of steady shoving. And how those first zigzags through the dense pine forest lengthened themselves out when I was on them! And how aimlessly and indefinitely the road above the tree level seemed to be trying to run round itself over the rocky plateau! And how hot the sun was before I had reached the Hospice and the lake at the summit! And there was no mistaking the seriousness of the San Bernardino when we began to descend. Three mountain sides of zigzags were waiting for us, one immediately below the other. The first was all stones and tourists, and an occasional diligence. The Swiss, with their usual ingenuity, have decided that the foreigner must work as well as pay his way over the Alps, and so they repair their roads, which means dumping down

great cartloads of stones anywhere and anyhow, in August, at the height of the season. With both brakes on and my feet on the pedals, I slipped and jolted round the turns, all the time ringing my bell, for the tourist in Switzerland never sees further than his

WINDINGS OF THE SAN BERNARDINO.

own nose, always walks in the middle of the road, and is stone deaf. Here he—or she as often—was mostly Italian or German, as he is usually English at Zermatt, American at Chamounix. Each nation, apparently, has appropriated its own special bit of the playground of Europe, and round it drawn a rigid line to mark the limits of the game. Beyond the

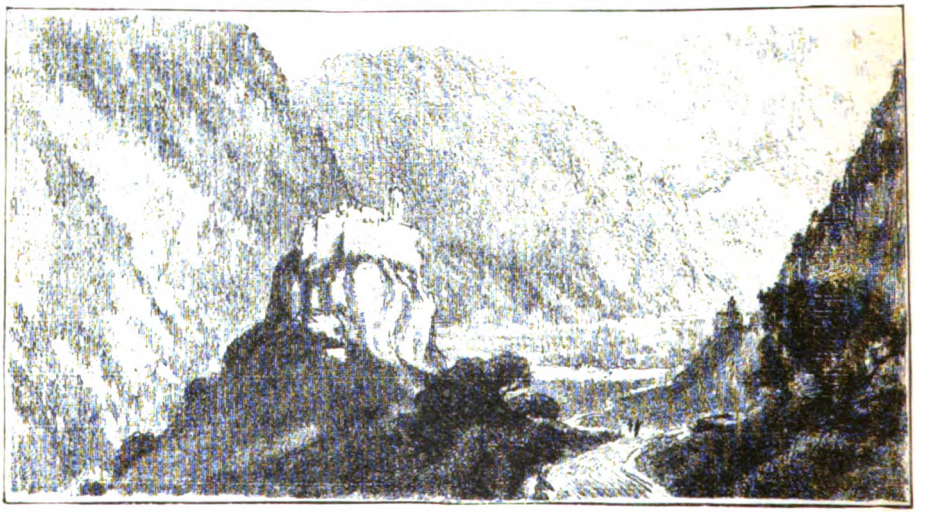
village of San Bernardino we met no tourists, which was a good thing, for the way was dangerous enough without them.

The view down upon the second series of zigzags was awful. The

THE VAL MESOCCO.

road seemed to tilt downward at the same angle as the mountain, and to uncoil itself like some monstrous serpent over the bare grassy slopes. It looked as if only a Blondin could walk where I must steer my bicycle.

And always in front was J., doomed by every known law of gravitation to pitch headlong. It would not have been so bad had I seen no further than the corner I was turning, for I had full control of my machine. But I was always in a panic at the prospect of the next curve, the next winding, and every stray goat, though it was more frightened than I,



CASTLE OF MESOCCO.

added to my terror. But I got to the bottom safe and sound, and to the bottom of the next zigzags, and it was all easy after that, coasting through a wonderful valley, where the castle-crowned hills, the winding stream, the waterfalls breaking in airy clouds of spray, and the rich wooded mountains arranged and re-arranged themselves into compositions that some day ought to make the Val Mesocco the Holy Land

of revived romanticism. And I coasted until of a sudden a gale of wind roared up the valley right into my face.

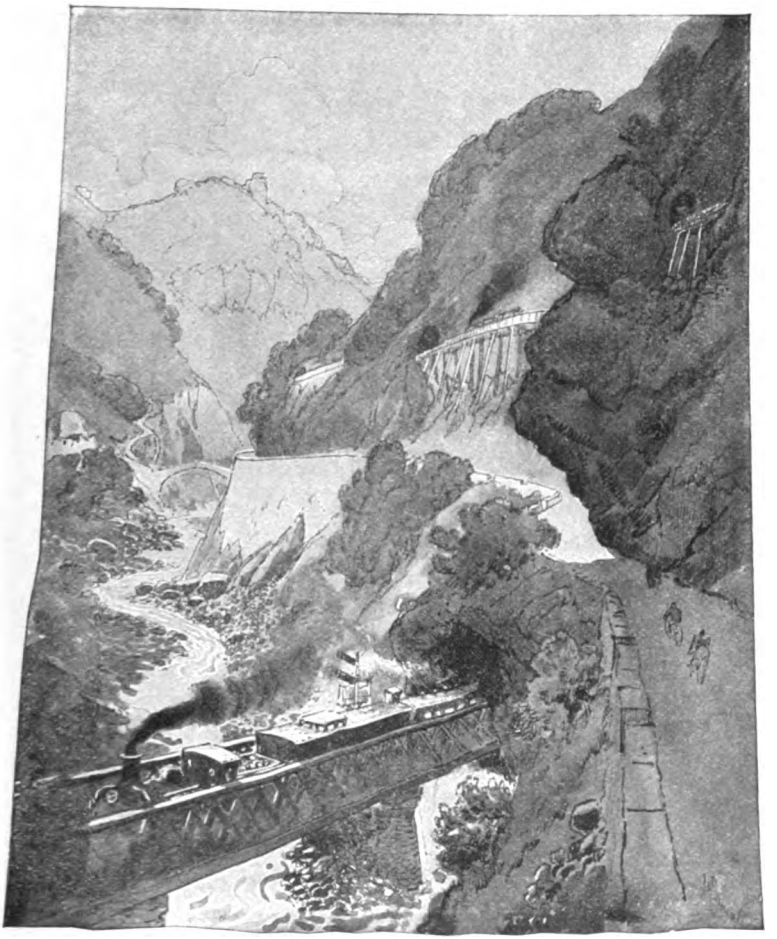
When we came to where the St. Gotthard road joins the San Bernardino to run on with it to Bellinzona, we turned straight back northward, for the St. Gotthard was our next pass. But a stiffer gale blew down the Val Ticino, and the road was all stones again, and we got no further that evening than Bodio, about twenty kilometres on the way.

VII

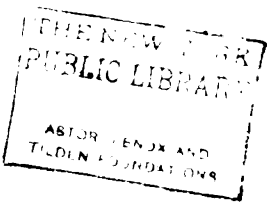
MY SEVENTH PASS

THE ST GOTTHARD

In the early morning the valley was black with smoke and smelt strong of coal dust. The road and the railway ran side by side for a while, occasionally crossing each other, when invariably we were detained by a freight train that had started out from Bodio with us. It was a regular race in the end ; the engine-driver was always craning his neck, on the lookout for our bicycles, as we waited behind the closed gates. Higher up in the valley the train disappeared into a tunnel, and we were sure we had seen the last of it ; but higher up still, after we had walked a stiff upgrade, out it came from another tunnel on a level with the road, though how in the world it climbed there, and what it had been doing all that time, and where it had been wandering in the insides of the mountain, was the mystery. Then we lost it again in a narrow gorge with space only for the stream and the high overhanging road cut out of the rock, and overtook it again at a higher point beyond. And so we lost and overtook, or were overtaken by it, throughout the morning. Or sometimes it puffed by hundreds of feet below, sometimes hundreds of feet above ; now it was on one side of the valley, now on the other ; now going with us, now running away from us. You must travel by



THE RAIL AND THE ROAD OVER THE ST. GOTTHARD.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GORGE OF FAIDO, ST. GOTTHARD.

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

road to realise the wonder of the St. Gotthard railway. When it was out of sight there was no forgetting it ; the black smoke hung over the valley, the smell of coal dust filled it, and everywhere were the signs of the change its coming had worked. Old posting inns and châlets were falling into ruins by the roadside. We did not meet a diligence, not a wagon, not a carriage, and only one tourist—a German on a bicycle, who tore past like a cyclone. There was not time to see his face, but who, save a German, would carry on his own back a bag that might as easily be strapped to his wheel ?

There were plenty of tourists, though, in the little towns with convenient stations. Faido was full of them ; they blocked the way into Airolo, where we almost killed a row of solemn, frock-coated, top-hatted men, who may have been senators; but bicycles coming down hill at twenty miles an hour would not stop for the whole Italian Government in the flesh. Still no one was hurt.

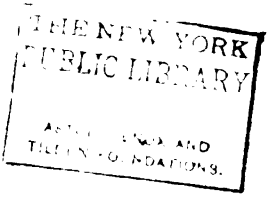
For days I had said, on the St. Gotthard I could take the railway if I was tired. But I rode almost all the way to Airolo. After Airolo, where the railway set out on its wonderful short cut through the mountain, I walked, and so did J. I have travelled into Italy by the St. Gotthard line several times, but never have I had the proper respect for it until that afternoon when we saw a train swallowed up in the great tunnel, and then walked above it for hours and hours before we reached the top of the pass it was burrowing through beneath us. We mounted and mounted and mounted up long zigzags, through woods, past two forts ; we mounted a high, barren valley above the zigzags ; we mounted an endless road and crept along the mountain side, shadeless and blazing hot, and wherever there was a spring, we sat down and drank ; if the

dangers of glacier water are half as great as they are said to be, we should never have survived.

By a lonely Refuge, which I foolishly hoped meant the top, there was a sharp turn, and I was under piled-up peaks, and now there came both snow and ice, and it grew wondrous cold, and I shivered before the perspiration was dry on my face. On the opposite steep, short zigzags went up like stairs among the cliffs. I could have dropped at the sight. But when a cart passed and the driver offered my bicycle a place by the side of two Germans bowed under their knapsacks, but clutching their alpenstocks, I refused; I was doing this thing myself; I had not come to have it done for me. Carriages toiled after me, but the people had got out and were scrambling up the rocky footpaths. Carriages toiled down, and once two brave women on foot, in bloomers, with bags on their backs—Germans, of course. When one series of zigzags came to an end another began, and they kept getting shorter and steeper and stonier. I felt that if I once stopped, it would be all up with me; the wind struck like a blow; and J. told me he was never so near collapsing. Altogether the St. Gotthard realised my idea of what a pass should be more than any I had crossed, or was to cross later. It was not the highest on our route; 6,942 feet is its guide book measure, and to this, the Furka adds 1,051 feet. But on none other had I the same impression of having climbed to the top of everywhere.

However, the top of everywhere being in Switzerland, we found an inn, furnished with the correct assortment of dining-rooms: one downstairs for the guides and couriers; a second upstairs, to the left, for the Swiss native, on this occasion military chiefly—some dozen officers, the whole strength of the Swiss army, I should say; and a third, to the

FAIDO, ST. GOTTHARD.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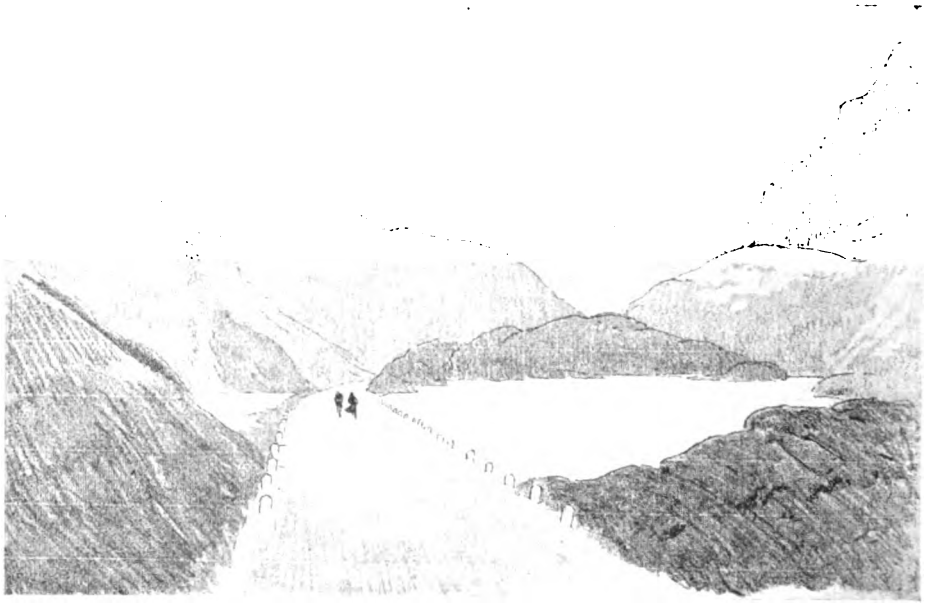
right, for the foreign tourist. Castes in India are nothing to price distinctions in Switzerland. A flock of Italian women, led by one man, came in with us and called loudly for grog and postcards. Everybody called for postcards. After Rousseau set the fashion, people wept over the sublimities of Nature which they could not see for their tears ; now they turn their backs upon the spectacle and let their feelings loose upon illustrated postcards.

When we went out a German cycler, in yachting cap, was at the door, tying a huge plank of wood, shaped liked a paddle, to his back wheel. He explained the "system," and we showed him our brakes. "Excellent," said he, "though in time sure to destroy the tyres." We said we would rather any day risk our tyres than our lives. This struck him as a new and original argument worth considering. But he had worked out a theory—he was a German—and so he took stronger string and tied his paddle on all the tighter. He was going the other way, and I missed the catastrophe.

There is an easy side for the cycler down every one of the great passes, and the easy side down the St. Gotthard is the northern. It was coasting all the way ; round the lakes at the top ; for kilometres along the road skirting the mountain ; even down the zigzags into Hospenthal ; and after that easy riding across the valley to Andermatt. Coasting and easy riding, that is, when there were no stones on the road. When there were I liked to have my feet on the pedals. I did not care to chance a sudden sideslip into a gutter only a few thousand feet deep. It was coasting again after Andermatt and the opening of the gorge, where, according to your fancy, you can look at the Devil's Bridge or buy a St. Bernard dog at the near shop. There is another fort just here. If ever

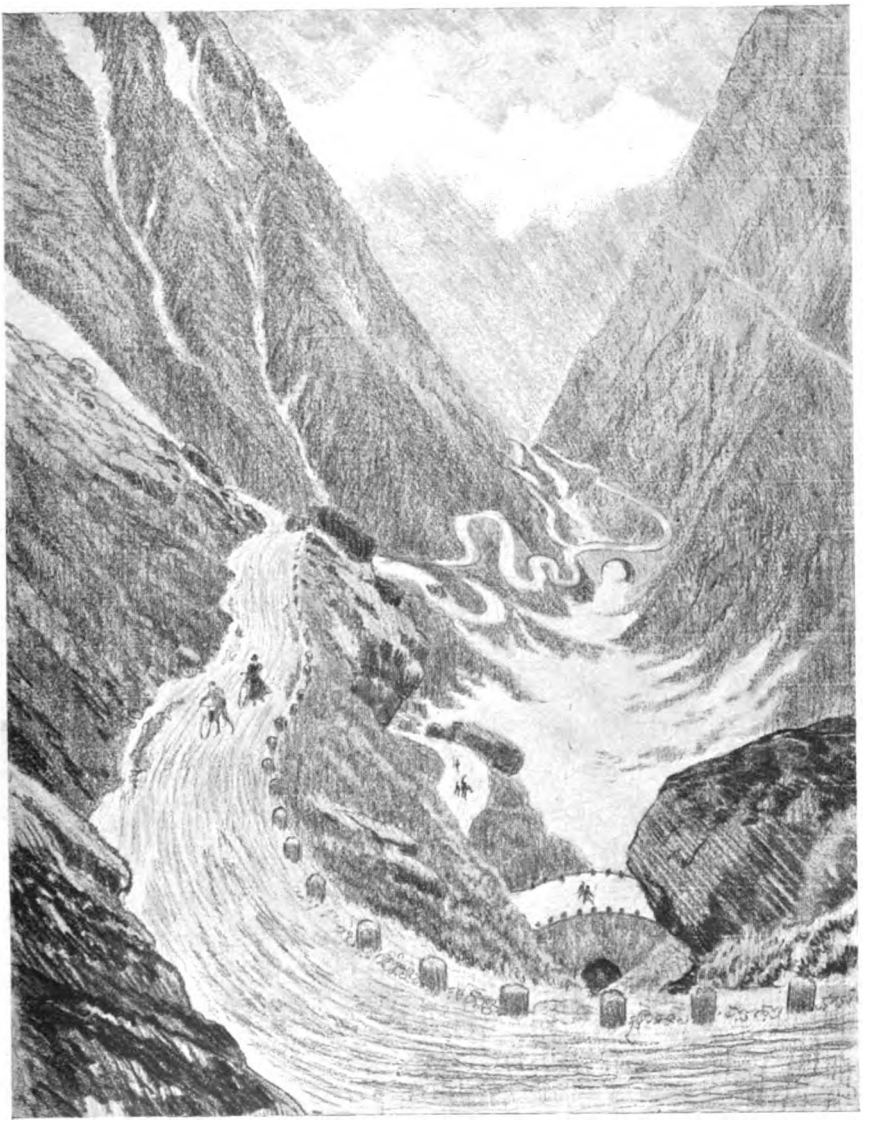
Switzerland goes to war again, the enemy may march unmolested through the valley of the Ticino or the Reuss, but he will never climb the St. Gotthard and capture the hotel with its tourists and its postcards. We started through the gorge, but the thought that we were back-pedalling



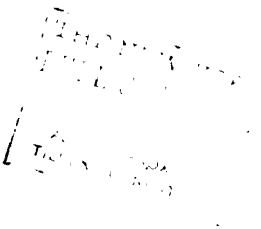
LAKES, TOP OF ST. GOTTHARD.

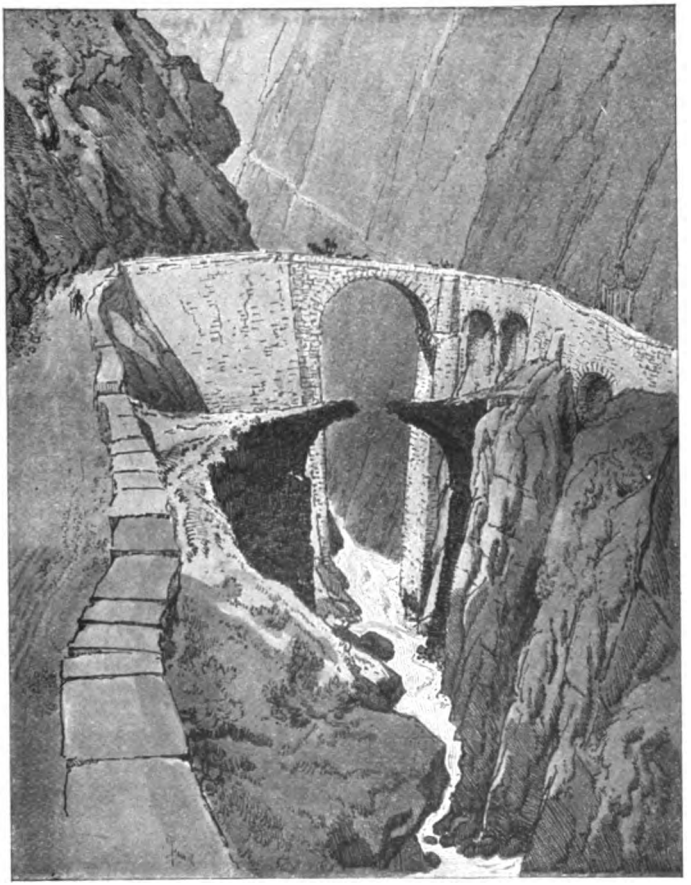
down, only to climb it in the morning, was too much for us, and sent us back again to Andermatt before we had gone half way.

At Andermatt I learned a little more of the peculiarities of Swiss hotel keepers. We put up in a sham châlet that looked modest and was comfortable, though full of Germans. Why is it that the German,

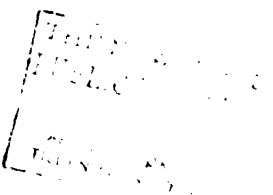


THE ST. GOTTHARD PASS, ITALIAN SIDE.





THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE, THE PASS OF ST. GOTTHARD.



who has such admirable qualities at home, becomes a public nuisance when he travels? Next door was a big hotel with gold-laced porters and English speaking waiters. But the coffee for our breakfast was brought from the hotel, and as we were loading our bicycles we saw a procession of servants carrying coffee, butter, bread, honey, napkins from one house to another. The proprietor had merely improved upon the three dining-rooms plan, and had his two hotels with the same food and different prices. We got in the wrong one by accident and were extremely comfortable, and fared better and paid less than usual.

VIII

MY EIGHTH PASS

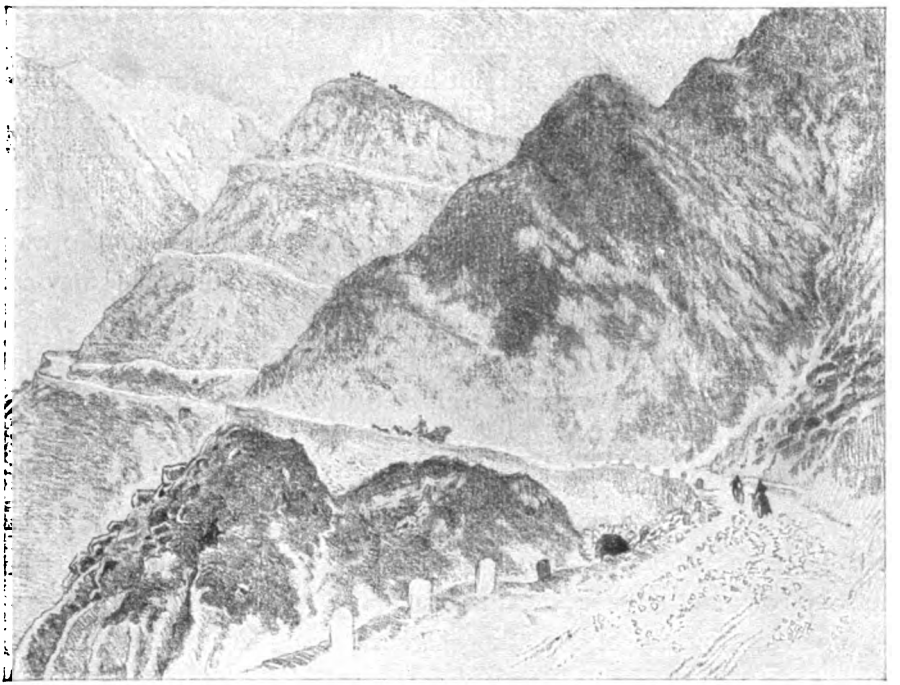
THE FURKA

THE Furka was our highest pass. To prepare for it we ate a second breakfast at Realp, at the other end of the valley, where the road begins its long windings up the mountain. There we met an Italian who had just come down on his bicycle and could tell us all about it, and we sat talking until valley and slopes glowed red hot in ten o'clock sunshine, and most of the tourists were already kilometres beyond and above.

While we were still on the first zigzags, we could see their carriages on the higher windings, and then finally on the sky line, apparently on a narrow ridge at the very top of the mountain, where it looked as if at the first puff of wind they must go plunging over into space. It was one steady grind through dust and ruts, with as little variety in the mountain side as in the road that scaled it. We had long since left the trees for this unvarying waste of rocks and stones and boulders, as solitary and savage as the "inaccessible haunt" Byron made the fashion for his morbid heroes, when there appeared in the road before us a smiling youth in a straw hat, and over his shoulders a short alpenstock, from which dangled a ladylike little bag, an umbrella, and a big paper valise of a pattern invented by the German.

"Say!" he remarked in the common language of the Alps, "have you seen my sister?"

It was sublime—7,000 feet—and we felt, with a thrill of patriotism, American. There is no morbid nonsense about your modern hero; he



CLIMBING THE FURKA.

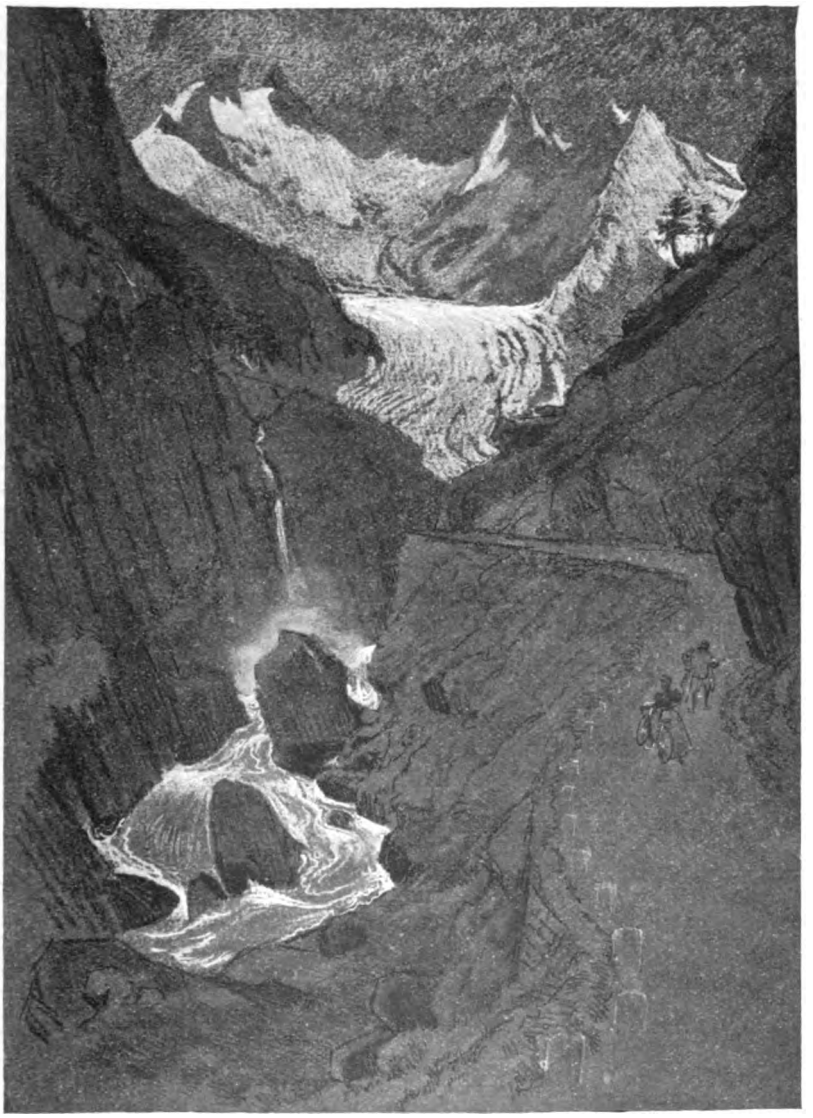
is not to be discountenanced by any mere mountain. It happened that, two or three zigzags below, I had seen a young lady sprawling full length by the roadside. The description answered; he recognised her.

Two staring white placards among the boulders advertised a couple of

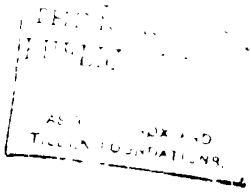
rival hotels somewhere higher in the waste ; the Swiss can give the company promoter a tip in the art of advertisement. We were far beyond the topmost zigzag, which was not near the real summit, when we reached the first hotel. We did not like it ; I felt sure we could get nothing there but view ; and we tramped on, at the dizziest distance above a stony valley, to the second. If I had not liked that, I must have stopped, anyway. I could not have gone a step further. Outside was a confusion of carriages and hostlers and dogs ; inside, a confusion of tongues. We sat at table with a party of our countrywomen, who drank beer as recklessly as the German Frau, and found fault with their food as furiously as the man on the Mississippi steamboat who wasn't used to good living at home, but, Great Scott ! when he paid fifty cents for his dinner he was going to have a square meal !

We waited until the carriages had trailed their dust far up and down the long slanting line of the road, and then we went on, I always walking, always pushing. Another steady grind through dust and ruts, above the grimmest of grim valleys, and I was on a bleak platform, among snowy peaks, 7,993 feet above the sea. And the American was seated on the topmost crag. " Howdy ? " said he. He had passed me somehow, and " sister " was lost again.

The road, instead of ascending higher, turned a corner, and now in front of me was the bold, beautiful outline of the Bernese Oberland, and the streams went running and leaping toward the Rhone Valley, and we coasted carefully to where the Rhone Glacier swept, a frozen hurricane, over the mountains, and the road took precipitate flight down the break-neck slope below us, zigzagging as it went. Tourists were staring at the glacier through opera glasses or having it pointed out to them by



RHONE GLACIER FROM THE ROAD BELOW.



guides, and if I ventured to stop, some one was offering to take me on, or under or above it for a franc. The first zigzag had brought my feet to the pedals, so steep was it, and the people made the long, endless

RHONE GLACIER FROM THE FURKA, GRIMSEL PASS IN THE DISTANCE.

descent doubly perilous. Nor did I dare to coast on the fairly straight stretch of road beyond, nor, for that matter, to stay on my machine when a carriage passed, in such an unspeakable condition was the way. Some idea of its badness may be had from the fact that the Swiss

Government had actually set two men to mend it, with a broom and a hoe.

I thought the descent more perilous than ever, when, from the Rhone Glacier Hotel, I watched other cyclers tackle it; six or seven in all, and only one coasting with ease. He had a pneumatic brake like ours. The others controlled their machines by the most laborious contrivances, the simplest being to back pedal with the right foot, while the left was lifted up and pressed firmly on the front tyre. And I suppose they were all rejoicing over the pound or so saved in weight by not carrying brakes. It added to our comfort to sit there, conscious of a good day's work done and a room secured in the attic, and to see them one after the other turned away from a hotel full to overflowing; some to tear down to Brieg, others to press on tediously up the Grimsel. It was a judgment for not having brakes. With brakes, they might have beaten me, and been given the only room in the hotel.

IX

MY NINTH PASS

THE GRIMSEL

THE Grimsel did not seem so tedious when I made my ascent in the morning. The pass is higher than the Splügen and the St. Gotthard—7,103 feet. But at the Rhone Glacier Hotel, our starting place, most of the climbing had been done. From there, it is only about ten kilometres up. We were about two hours on the zigzags to the top. There was barely time to be tired, and if I could expend my best bad language on the road, it did provide entertainment in the variety of its views back upon the glacier.

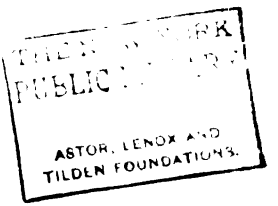
But of the descent on the other side, what can I say, except that it was a coast of some forty kilometres—twenty-five miles! Think of it! And, on the whole, an easy coast. A post carriage did its best to run me down on the first zigzag, under the sheer walls of rock where Tyndall almost lost his life. But I let my bicycle go faster than ever before, down to the dark lakes and the Hospice in the high naked valley; down through the gorge beyond, the Bernese Alps towering in front and behind, the road winding and unwinding, now on the bare cliffs, now on the tiny narrow strips of pasture land. The whole descent was so rapidly accomplished that I remember it only as one long flight among

mountains that changed with lightning speed. I was obliged to slow up but two or three times : once, when we passed a herd of cattle with a black bull browsing right by the roadside—" the sweet bells of the

THE HOSPICE ON THE GRIMSEL.

sauntering herd " may be music to the poet, but on an Alpine pass I would rather hear any other sound ; and again, when we overtook the tourists stalking along in the middle of the road, their conduct far less gentlemanly than that of the bull, who at least did keep out of my way;

DOWN THE GRIMSEL.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and, worst of all, when I met the diligence and post wagons, and the drivers would not give me any space at all on either side of the road, and then threatened J. with a whip because we tried to walk by. Except for these halts, we coasted on, past waterfalls, under overhanging cliffs and cornices of rock, through tunnels, from the narrow defile, down, and down, and down, and down, and down, into wider valleys ; and on, and on, until it was a positive relief to take my feet from the rests and work and walk up the big hill just before Meiringen.

X

MY TENTH PASS

THE BRUNIG

We were in Meiringen by half-past ten; we let a shower pass; we ate our breakfast. It was still early. I was still fresh. I made up my mind, and induced J., to do two passes that day, or die in the attempt, and we rushed down the valley to the foot of the Brunig, a baby among passes, but 3,396 feet high, with a road over it, I had been told, like a cinder-track. We lost the railway in the woods to our right, Lake Brienz was already far below to our left, and we were too high on the pass to turn back, when the heavens opened, and down came the deluge. Our mackintoshes against it were no better than paper. We stood under a tree—we might as well have stood under a waterfall. We walked, for the cinder-track was a running stream. In ten minutes we were wet to the skin, in another five J. was deadly ill; he always collapses somewhere, somehow, on these trips. We waded through water, we stuck in the mud. We could not see anything, we did not know how far we had got, nor how long we had been getting there, but it made no difference. We stopped at the first inn we came to without asking any questions,

nor were we tempted to go further by a glimpse of a huge hotel emerging from the near clouds.

By good luck we had stumbled into the decentest inn, I do believe, in all Switzerland. The landlady grudged nothing that she did for us, and we made her do pretty nearly everything. She did not look at us with hungry eyes of calculation, but lavished her attentions out of pure goodness of heart—never doled them out with the average waiter's or chambermaid's greed for probable tips. She carried away to the kitchen our wardrobe in one draggled, dirty, muddy heap, staggering under its weight, but her trouble and the fire found no place in our bill the next day. She brought us clothes, the skirt of her best gown and a shawl for me, her husband's black trousers and socks for J. She offered us pie. She talked to us in broken American, and there, really, was the explanation of the rest. She had lived long enough in America to forget her Swiss manners.

It was not much after one, but the landlady's clothes were a shocking misfit ; we were chilled to the bones, and we went to bed and spent the afternoon there, staring out upon the deluge, while some one downstairs turned a hand-organ, grinding out funereal polkas and waltzes. To such degrading depths of inactivity had the baby pass and the road like a cinder-track reduced us.

Clouds everywhere in the morning, and a thick wet mist. But we were off at seven, and, after a walk of three minutes, on our machines, so near had we been, without knowing it, to the top of the pass. In fact we had climbed two passes in one day. Instead of the usual Hospice, a railway station marked the summit, but this does not detract from my performance. I doubt if any woman, or many

men, have climbed the Grimsel and the Brunig in a morning. People may object that I rode too fast. But I had not come out to play the enthusiast and record my emotions on postcards; I had come to ride over the Alps on a bicycle, and I had ridden so well that now I was on the last pass of all.

We coasted down a road too good to be spoiled even by eighteen hours' rain. But dismal! Nothing but mist, and dripping wet woods, and damp tourists, sitting on damp benches waiting patiently for the view, or straggling all over the road, swearing if we rang our bell and asked for a foot to pass. Signs pointed to where all sorts of mountains ought to be seen, sign-posts directed to finer sites of observation. And there was no view, for all the preparations; none from the Brunig, none from Lungern, none from the Sarnen See. For us, there was a delightful coast, but nothing to look at, save clouds and gradually dissolving mist.

We rode through Sarnen, through Alpnach, by the station of the railroad up Mont Pilatus. Mont Pilatus itself had retired out of sight. There was no view. The railroad, like a Jacob's ladder, might have led into heaven for all we knew; a train started straight up into the clouds. It was as if the Swiss, who puts a turnstile at the mouth of his gorges and labels his glaciers, had hung a curtain in front of the spectacle of Lucerne.

We struggled through mud on the road that runs low on the shores of the lake, under high walls of rock. We rattled over the *pavé* into the town. Pilatus sullenly kept out of sight, the Jungfrau was off duty for the day. There was no view. We ate our lunch in a restaurant on the river banks, we "did" the sights of the town,

we had some money changed. But still there was no Pilatus, no Jungfrau, no view. We had crossed our last pass, we had looked our last upon the Alps ; they had gone completely. We never saw them again.

ENVOI

I AM told I have made a record. I think I have, and one to be proud of. I went over nine passes—six in less than a week. I worked at times as hard as a dock labourer. Dock labourer! The dock labourer growls eight hours a day and loafs the others; I often worked sixteen. I was scorched by the sun, stifled by the dust, drenched by the rain. Long kilometres of climbing were the price paid for every coast. What was the good of it, you ask. No good at all! And here you have the great beauty of the ride. There are moments and moods when you must toil for your holiday as for your daily bread. One man finds his happiness in goading a donkey up hill and down; another in pushing his wheel over the Alps. Besides, I wanted to see if I could cross the Alps on a bicycle. I did, and any woman who rides—and knows how to ride—a good strong machine fitted with a good strong brake on each wheel, who will be wise enough not to let it get away with her on the down grade, nor to play herself out by riding it on a long steep ascent, and who is not afraid of work, may learn what pleasure there is in the exploit. But all these conditions must be fulfilled, otherwise I can answer neither for her wheel nor her life.

THE ROUTE

SWITZERLAND, as well as France and Italy, may be entered at any one of its many frontier stations free by cyclers accompanied by their wheels upon presentation of The Cyclists' Touring Club, or Touring Club de France, ticket. Members of the first organisation are saved numerous petty restrictions enforced by the latter. The bicycle must also, to obtain free entry, have a number legibly stamped on some undetachable part of the frame. On leaving the country the tourist must be careful to hand in at the customs house, and get a receipt for, the papers given him on entering. Cyclers who do not belong to these organisations must pay duty on entering the country.

The Swiss Touring Club is allied to the C.T.C., the T.C.F., and the L.A.W., and members of these organisations are entitled to all the privileges enjoyed by the Swiss. We have not found the benefits very appreciable.

In cycling in Switzerland more attention must be paid to the lay of the land and the geography of the country than anywhere else. Want of care in mapping out the easier and shorter side of a pass to climb will spoil all the pleasure of a tour—that is if one wishes to have the shortest climbs and the longest coasts. But heights, distances, and times are given by Baedeker, and though the C.T.C. Road-book is of no use in this way, the ordinary guides are perfectly satisfactory.

Roughly speaking, the shorter and steeper side of each pass is the

Swiss side; therefore try, as much as possible, to climb every pass from the easier side.

Thus, it is perfectly easy to ride to the top of the Col de la Faucille from Les Rousses; it is quite impossible to ride up to the top from Gex, and the coast down is much longer into France than into Switzerland. The Simplon should be climbed from Brieg, and not from Domo d'Ossola; the St. Gotthard from Airola, not from Göschenen. Lucerne, as it lies so low, is in fact a very bad place to start from; you must begin to climb up into the mountains as soon as you leave it, but you coast down to it from everywhere.

There are excellent Swiss Road Maps, Cartes Routières de Mulhaupt, published at Berne, which can be purchased in any of the large towns.

Beware the Swiss driver of all sorts of animals; he will force you in the gutter if he can.

Beware the tourists of all nations; he and she are quite blind and stone deaf, always walk in the middle of the road, and protest against giving you an inch of it.

The majority of English, American, and French cycle tourists enter Switzerland awheel from Dijon. The road is excellent from that city—once you are off its *pavé*. This is the route we followed :—

	KILOMETRES.	
Dijon		
Genlis	17	Excellent undulating road.
Auxonne	14	Cross the Saône, hilly, up and long descent to Dôle, rather dangerous turns in the town.
Sampans	11	
Dôle	5	
Parcey	7	Long up-grades, good road.
Mont Sous Vaudrey	11	
Montholier ...	10	Continual rise, culminating in zigzags beyond Poligny.
Poligny	9	

	KILOMETRES.		
Montrond... ...	13		Descent to Champagnole, thence continuous climbing to St. Laurent ; very hilly, last part very steep down into Morez.
Champagnole ...	10		
Pont de Chaux ...	12		
St. Laurent ...	9		
Morez	12		
Les Rousses ...	9	French Customs	Steady climb.
Col de la Faucille	19		Easy riding to the top, fine road.
Gex	11		Steep descent at top of col.
Sacconax	12	Swiss Customs	Vile road.
Geneva	5		
Thonex	5	Swiss Customs	do. do.
Annemasse ...	4		
Bonneville ...	17		Bad to fair. Take direct road on right bank of river.
Cluses	15		
Sallanches... ...	16		The road is being superseded by rail, and it was bad, more or less, from Geneva to La Fayet in 1897.
La Fayet	8		
Chamounix ...	19		Beware of traffic by the side of river. Good riding into Chamounix.
Argentière ...	4		
Col des Montets ...	3½		Good road. Climb, and then descent to La Châtelard.
La Châtelard ...	11	Swiss Customs	
Tête Noire ...	4		Abominable road all the way to Martigny. Climb.
Trient	4		Steep descent.
Col de la Forclaz...	3		Unridable climb ; mere track.
La Croix, join St. Bernard route ...	11		Continuous steep descent ; road improves.
Martigny	3		Good road, gradual rise, wind usually behind in afternoon in summer. Picturesque old towns all the way from Martigny to Visp ; thence to Brieg the going is very easy.
Sion	29		
Sierre	17		
Visp	28		
Brieg	9		The pass commences in the middle of the town, quite unridable until near Berisal.
Berisal	14		

	KILOMETRES.		
Hospice	12		More or less ridable. Gradual descent, which becomes steeper near Gonda, where great care is necessary.
Simplon	8		
Swiss Customs ...	12		
Isella	2	Italian Customs	Good road, descending all the way.
Domo d'Ossola ...	19		
Premosello ...	26		Level road.
Gravellona ...	10		do.
Baveno ... ... (boat to Laveno)	11		Level road by Lake Maggiore.
Varese	22		Hilly road.
Como ... ... (boat to Varenna)	24		Final descent into Como.
Colico	18		Splendid road by Lake Como.
Chiavenna ...	28		Gradual rise.
Campo Dolcino ...	13		Growing steeper.
Pianazza	17		Up all the way.
	2	Italian Customs	
Frontier	3		Steep climb.
Splügen	10	Swiss Customs	Bad descent.
Hinterrhein ...	10		Fairly level road.
S. Bernardino Pass	9		Unridable climb most of the way.
S. Bernardino Town	8		Steep descent.
Mesocco	14		do. do. easing off.
Fork	28		Easy descent to level.
Biasco	16		Level.
Giornico	20		Gradual rise.
Faido	18		do. do. with steep bits.
Airolo	14		do. do. ridable.
Hospice St. Gotthard	13		Steep all the way nearly.
Return again: Hospenthal	15		Easy descent.
Andermatt	3		Level.
Teufelsbrücke	2		Rapid descent.
Realp	7		Easy climb.

	KILOMETRES.	
Furka Pass ...	13	Little riding.
Rhone Glacier Hotel	11	Steep, winding, dangerous descent all the way.
Grimsel Pass ...	10	Climb.
Summit of Pass ...		Magnificent coast all the way, unridable climb in other direction.
Hospice		
Handeck		
Guttannen ...		
Meiringen ...	40	
Brunig Pass ...	15	Very easy climb, but the best road in Switzerland; easy descent.
Sarnen	23	
Lucerne	26	Flat road round the lake.

From Lucerne the traveller may make his way to any part of the world by train or road.

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